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Issue 128

6-PAGE PREVIEW

GTAV

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EXCLUSIVE 10-PAGE FEATURE

WATCH DOGS

**UBISOFT TOPS ASSASSIN'S CREED WITH
ITS NEW OPEN-WORLD BLOCKBUSTER**

WHITE HOUSE DOWN

SAINTS ROW IV

PRESIDENTS, ALIENS AND SUPERPOWERS

REVIEWED

RESIDENT EVIL REVELATIONS

REAL SURVIVAL-HORROR RETURNS!

INSIDE

LOST PLANET 3

REMEMBER ME

**THE BUREAU: XCOM
DECLASSIFIED**

METRO: LAST LIGHT

**SPLINTER CELL
BLACKLIST**

+ MORE...

**SEQUEL-MASOCHISM
DARK SOULS II**

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



IAN

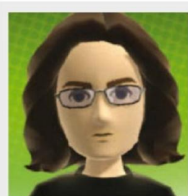
So, how's that new Xbox looking, then? Our editorial deadline means that as I write this I'm still left chewing over little more than all the rumour and speculation behind Microsoft's new console (always-on, second hand games and so on), whereas you guys and gals reading this will be fresh from a (hopefully dazzling) announcement event. But for all the bells and whistles everyone has been expecting Microsoft to shout about, I can only hope that all involved are still talking about the key feature here: games.

Sure it's great that the Xbox 360 can show films and TV shows, play music, surf the net and have a bunch of interactive apps to play around with – but I don't know a single person who bought a 360 for any one of those reasons. Most of us have got on-demand access through our set-top boxes, iPads, tablets, smartphones and a wealth of other sources for doing all that – it's just a nice convenience to have them in the same place when we've just logged out of Call of Duty or FIFA. Nope, people buy games consoles for the games; forget that and the war is lost.

We want to see stunning visuals and cutting-edge technologies delivering a new wave of physics and animation engines that will yank our jaws to the floor and make our beloved 360 look like something from the dark ages. We want games to be bigger, better and more creative than they've ever been – and we don't mind using a controller to play them, either. Kinect 2.0, IllumiRoom, SmartGlass and the like are all great and lovely, but they'll always be a secondary reason for booting up the new machine. So fingers crossed that next issue we're talking about launch titles and not explaining how things work.

Enjoy the issue!

Ian Collen,
Joint Editor



JAMES

... has been at his photogenic best this issue, dressing up for the cameras in a variety of guises that both confuse and impress the rest of the team. Somehow he manages to look effortlessly cool one moment, evil and angry the next, and then like a Columbian drug lord from the Eighties after that – whereas we only get to see him chilling in a scruffy t-shirt and talking about *Twin Peaks*... weird.



WILL

... is still wandering around his new home like a kid in a sweet shop, revelling in its grandeur and, more importantly, the silence surrounding it. Seriously, it's got a garden with a water feature and everything (although we do rather like the folding ironing board that slides out on a kitchen drawer) and it's made the many hours needed to bash and slash through *Dead Island Riptide* for our review all the more enjoyable.



MATT

... remains almost the perfect freelancer – the kind that rarely says no to anything and a person who knows a few markets that some of us are oblivious to. Need someone to head out to an ice bar in London to see *Lost Planet 3*? Someone to replay the same Resident Evil that they've already completed on the 3DS and then devling into an in-depth feature on the horror genre as a whole? Matt's the guy. The man.



KIRSTEN

... has been wrapping up warm and stocking up on air filters for our *Metro: Last Light* review. Of course, when we told her we were sending her into an underground system filled with utter despair, depravity and the kind of shady characters who would just as soon spit in your eye as give you the time of day, she thought we were talking about a press trip to London. Fighting demons in the dark seemed like a right breeze after that.

ISSUE 128

www.360-gamer.com

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Distributed through the UK newstrade by
Seymour Ltd, 0207 429 4000
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT

Printed in the UK by
Precision Colour Printing Ltd

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ANOTHER QUALITY COLD CUT FROM



EST. 2003

360 GAMER © 2013 Uncooked Media Ltd
ISSN 1747-8103



13,124





WorldMags.net

ISSUE 128

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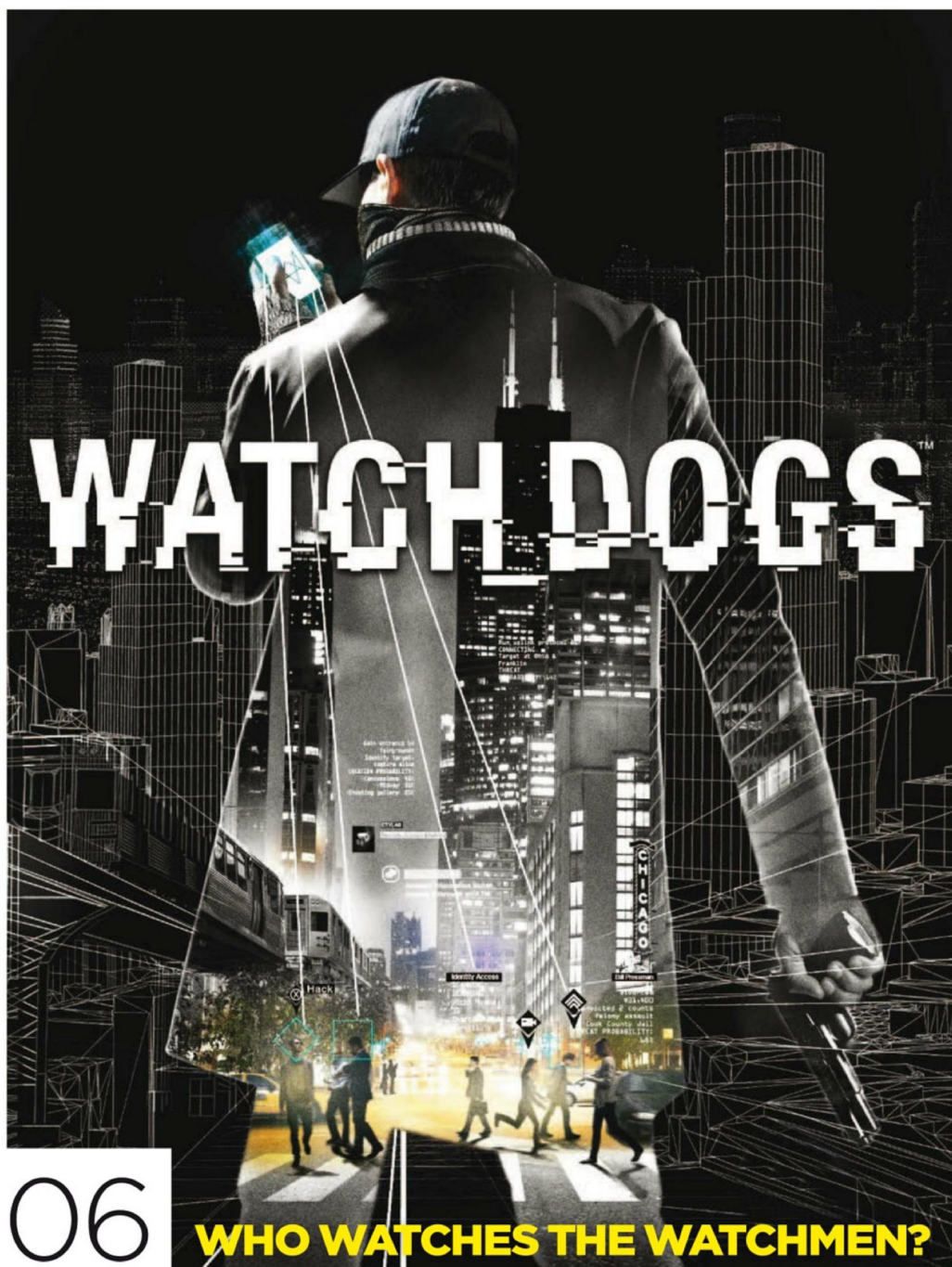
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WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN?

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80 METRO: LAST LIGHT

Metro 2033 shocked the world, but does the sequel merit another trip underground or does it just need to be buried six feet under?

"Blood Dragon is to Eighties action movies what Machete is to grindhouse cinema, delivering ludicrous spectacle, cheesy one-liners, VHS-era overindulgence and shit-eating grins"

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BOO WHO?

32 HORROR'S SURVIVAL

As Shinji Mikami unleashes *The Evil Within* and Capcom gets old school with *Resident Evil Revelations*, we take a look at the current sorry state of the survival-horror genre...



TWENTY MINUTES INTO THE FUTURE

BRIBERY, EXTORTION, REVENGE AND DOUBLE-DEALING - *WATCH DOGS* HAS IT ALL AND UBISOFT EXPECTS THE GAME TO BECOME ITS LEADING IP FOR THE END OF THIS GENERATION OF CONSOLES AND THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT. AND FROM THE LOOK OF THINGS, AUTUMN IN THIS BLUSTERY CITY OF ELECTRONIC ESPIONAGE COULD CERTAINLY BE UNDER ITS CONTROL...



PUBLISHER:
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER:
Ubisoft Montreal

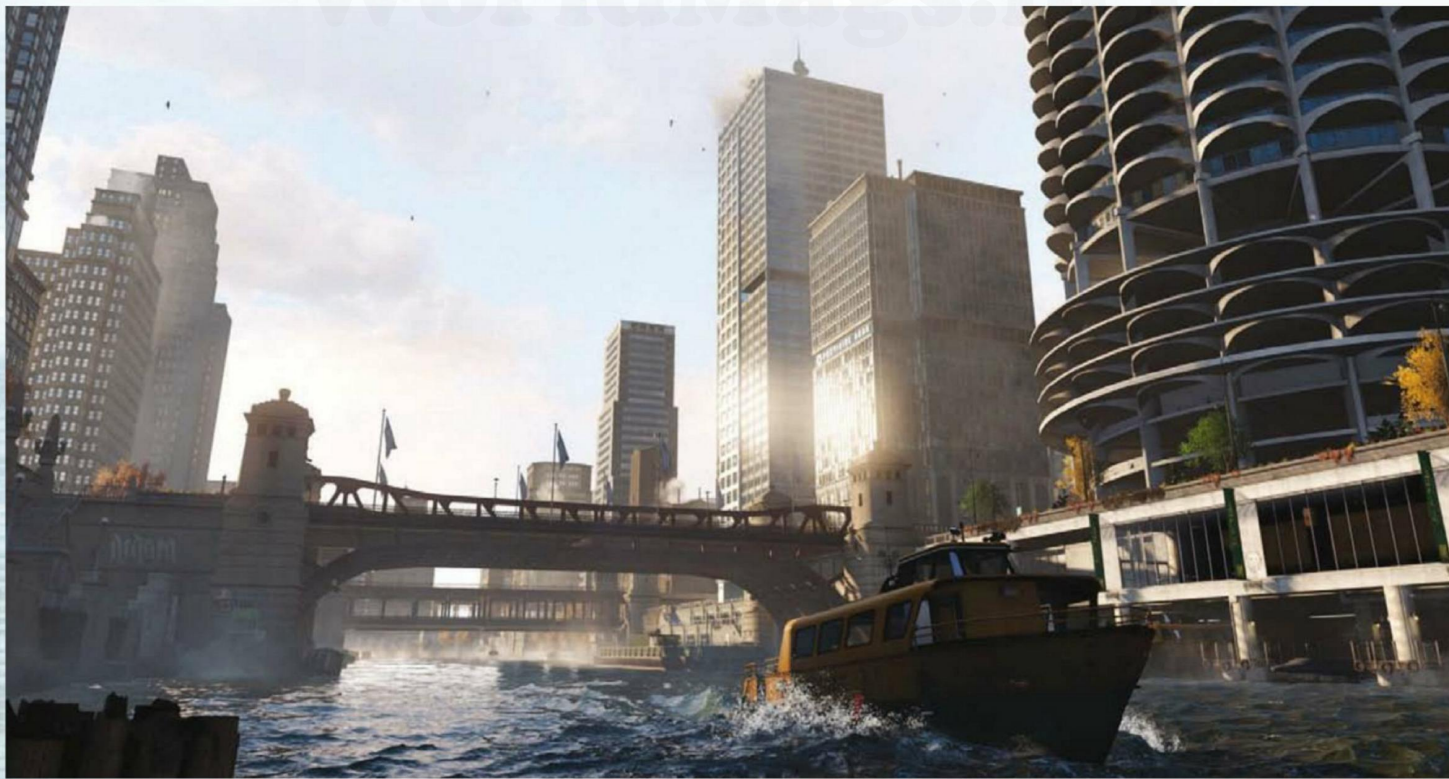
RELEASED:
22 November 2013

XBOX LIVE:
Yes

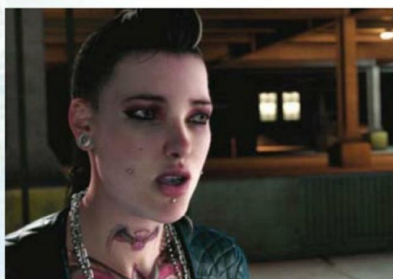
On 14 August 2003, a driver confused by the lack of street lighting ran their car off a road just west of Ottawa onto a family's front yard, killing a father of two. In New York, a man who had puffed himself out having climbed 17 flights of stairs died of a heart attack – his apartment's lifts weren't working and he was too unfit to get home via a different route. In Pittsfield Township, Michigan, a 27-year-old male fought

the unexpected darkness by lighting candles in his mobile home, fell asleep and was then killed in a fire. And in the small Detroit suburb of Harper Woods, carbon monoxide leaked from a faulty generator and poisoned another man to death.

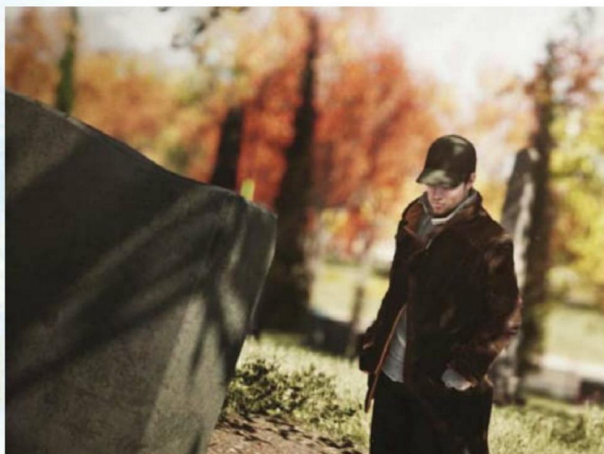
That evening, millions of people living in such metropolitan areas were able to view the Milky Way with their naked eyes for the first time. In total



ABOVE: *Watch Dogs* will be a launch title for the PlayStation 4, which explains the release of these PS4-derived screens.



BELOW: The game's name derives from the fact that some bastards killed Aiden's dog and he likes to watch Mr Binky's grave.



there were 11 fatal incidents linked to what has become known as the second-widest blackout in history, which affected the Northeastern and Midwestern US, as well as the Canadian province of Ontario.

A software bug found in the alarm system of the Ohio control room of the FirstEnergy Corporation was eventually blamed. And while its current website now claims with no retrospective irony that "Good Energy is... staying connected", it was this disconnection that eventually brought down 256 power stations after the automatic protective protocols kicked in across a single network that linked two countries. Or at least, that was the official story released to placate the general population. In *Watch Dogs'* reality, the lack of power and resultant deaths were all due to the actions of a malevolent hacker engaging in information warfare.

The last couple of decades have witnessed science fiction doing what it so often does; responding to and extrapolating from contemporary situations. But hindsight has proved that many authors' visions of the near future are somewhat naïve impressions of how things actually end up playing out.

Despite the suggestion of the Cold War there was no nuclear war and

skirmishes in the resultant wastelands, as many books of the Seventies grimly suggested. In the Eighties, American corporations gained great power and influence while Japanese corps were thought to be gearing up to eventually take over the world, as many novelists and screenwriters envisioned they would do. Too bad, then, that the Japanese stock market crashed in 1989 and is still yet to fully recover, instead remaining largely stagnant.

OMNI CONSUMERS

These days it's not the faceless corporations or mass exterminations that are quite so commonly feared and examined, but rather the way that information is gathered, stored and exchanged, and how human beings interact in the age of the internet and global digital communications. Just look at how Twitter helped fuel the Arab Spring, how North Korean citizens are using mobile phones to access forbidden information and could be executed for doing so, and how the US has accused China of sneaking into the Land of The Free's computer systems.

Google Glass won't even be on general release until next year and already the technology, which has the potential to turn wearers into walking video cameras, has been banned in

"Watch Dogs will offer something that's deeper and wider, and enables many individual mechanics to work in concert to create an environment that's much more organic"

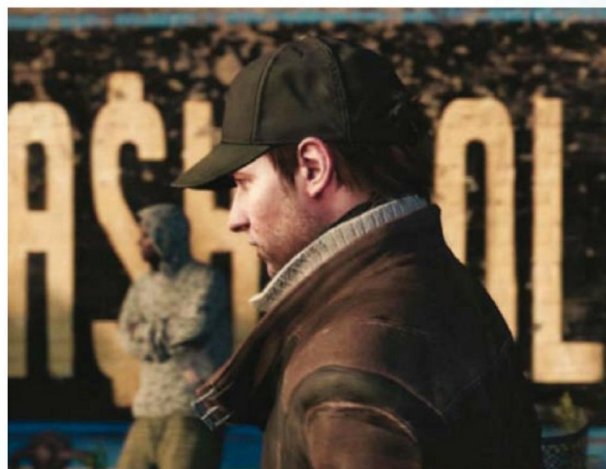


Seattle's 5 Point Café, where "ass kickings will be encouraged for violators." Fancy visiting Las Vegas' casinos and gentlemen's clubs? Well you're not getting in if you've got such technology resting on your nose, because that's already against house rules. It's not necessary to imagine future technology or politics in order to create a story or develop a concern – you now only have to look at what's actually available or is already being done and get just a little bit hypothetical.

So what would've happened if that 2003 blackout really was the work of

a hacker? Would FirstEnergy have hired more data security specialists and improved its firewalls, and a manslaughter charge be brought against a sought felon? Perhaps, though Ubisoft Montreal's writers see things playing out a bit differently, on a much wider scale – and in a manner that's going to be far more pleasurable to engage with.

Those in charge of Chicago, Illinois, so the fiction goes, decided that the safest way to protect their city's various computer systems from similar infiltration and abuse was to adopt a Central Operating System, or





By bringing Chicago's L train to a standstill, our hero surprises the cops so much that they become rotten shots.



HIGH STREET HUNTING

Watch Dogs will be available in four super versions for those of you with a hundred quid to spare and plenty of extra shelf space. The trick is that each one will be available at a different retailer. You'll be able to find The DedSec Edition in certain unspecified shops, and it's the one to get if you fancy a 23cm figurine of Aiden Pearce, artbook, soundtrack, steelbook, map of Chicago, four augmented reality cards to point a camera phone at and three badges. You'll also receive three extra single-player missions and so almost an hour of extra gameplay. Mmm, expensive.

Fancy being seen wearing Aiden's very baseball cap, which somehow advertises the game he actually stars in? Then the Vigilante Edition will be for you and it will be available from Game in the UK. It comes with the soundtrack, an extra single-player mission and even Mr Pearce's mask, should you *really* want to be popular at parties.

To get the Uplay Exclusive Edition you need to order via... Uplay. Do so and you'll receive the steelbook and three extra missions, and will probably not have to fork out a tonne in cash. Then there's the Special Edition, which again is a Game-exclusive and will furnish you with one extra mission for your trouble. Expect other versions including different outfits to be available and for such extras to arrive later as DLC at a price.

CtOS for short. This system not only controls communication networks, traffic lights, bridges, barriers and any other piece of modern wizardry that helps the metropolis function, it also houses a database that stores detailed information pertaining to each and every single citizen.

Hey, why provide hackers with lots of weak doors found in multiple locations to break through when you can create one massive and heavily protected door? Well, because one door needs but one key – and that key can be held on a digital communications device carried by a single highly skilled and motivated man: Aiden Pearce. And he will be you.

There are problems with this set-up, obviously – not least in that it requires telecommunications companies to relinquish their own networks to what amounts to a form of state control that would sound like the evil that is Socialism to many an American (and didn't you know that the Nazis were "National" Socialists?). The New World Order is taking over! There are a few holes in the plot, certainly, or at least aspects in need of clarification.

Perhaps there were protests and letter bombs before CtOS went online and everyone chilled out?

At this stage it's easy to be forgiving because, no matter how *Watch Dogs* explains itself and how it got to the reasonably contemporary world it depicts, it's still going to be Ubisoft's most ambitious project – not only of this generation of consoles, but for the opening months of the next. And anyway, it's set in an "alternative" Chicago where the drama doesn't deal with what might happen in years to come, but is instead concerned with what's happening pretty much now, had certain technologies been developed back in 2003.

GRASSY KNOLLS

Due for release here on 22 November (that's the 50th anniversary of the assassination of JFK, conspiracy fans), and clearly not going to look exactly like it did when demonstrated on a high-end PC during last year's E3 expo (at least on anything other than a high-end PC, next-gen Xbox or PS4), you can still expect the game to push current technology to its limit.

"YOU MAY AS WELL BE AN ASSASSIN IN WHITE ROBES STROLLING THROUGH A CITY FULL OF PEOPLE IN COLOURFUL CLOTHES"



ABOVE: The extendable baton – for when you really want to leave your mark in a hurry.

It's being built using Disrupt, a game engine created specifically for the job. And while *Assassin's Creed III* used the impressive AnvilNext (as will *Black Flag*) you can trace Anvil right back to 2007 when Desmond Miles first laid down in an Animus.

There have been plenty of open-world games that haven't required such freshly tailor-made tech, of course, and we're all used to seeing the ebb and flow of city life play out as our characters steal cars and run over pedestrians. *Watch Dogs* will offer something that's deeper and wider, and enables many individual mechanics to work in concert to create an environment that's much more organic and offers a great deal more experimentation in a highly detailed city.

It has to, or lead character Pearce (the man with the world's greatest smartphone) may as well just use his handheld gadget to simply organise games of pool, call a taxi or set up a date. He doesn't, and so Disrupt has to deal with far much more than has come before – and at a higher visual fidelity. Since he exists in a sandbox title, Pearce won't just have a single method to achieve his goals (often based on assassination – Ubisoft is on a roll) and thanks to the design of the city itself will be able to complete

them in a greater variety of ways than would usually be expected.

Watch Dogs is about using the power of surveillance and stealth (as well as some pretty epic violence) to your advantage. Thus the ability to survey a situation from an alleyway as well as from higher ground, or remotely via not-so closed circuit television cameras, will be essential. You can expect to explore vertically as well as horizontally and you'll be encouraged to do so, while every observable citizen will have their own database entry to access and behavioural patterns that can be witnessed.

GATHERING CLOUDS

While coding crowds undoubtedly requires more skill than we could ever muster, it's easy to see that making everyone act in the same way in response to the same input is a lot easier than attempting to recreate true individuality. And so should a car explode or a gunfight erupt, having some people scream and everyone run away makes sense.

Watch Dogs' inhabitants, however, also demonstrate degrees of bravery, stupidity, ignorance, interest and criminality, and come together to form what is hoped to be the most believable reaction of the smart and stupid things people do in a crisis



TOP: We're up for raising barriers and we really do hope there will be some skateboarders to thus upset.

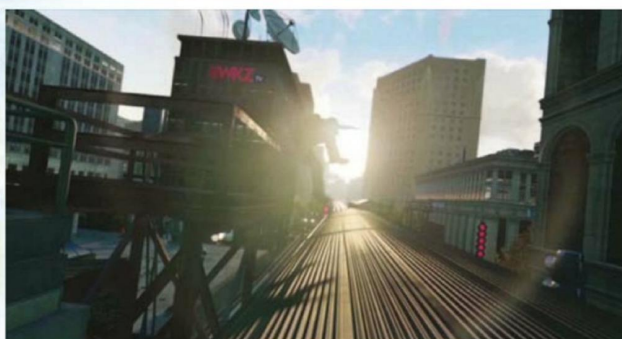
that's ever been created in a game. They'll also communicate with each other not just directly, but indirectly using their own cell phones – we're currently hoping that some will be so engrossed in their gadgets that they won't even notice that they're about to get hit by a truck.

Just populating the streets with all these convincing AI puppets will require a truly ridiculous amount of variables all to be monitored and maintained. Then you have to imagine the strain caused when the player does what players in open-world games tend to do: start to piss about. A human bottleneck could be created by simply making everybody's mobile ring, or denying their users access. And that's before you consider the concern you can raise in a city by messing with a traffic light or raising a bridge, as



TOP: Aiden was born in Belfast and has a shady past, which might help to explain this brutal kneecapping.

LEFT: Benicio Del Toro was upset to find that his local newsie didn't have **360 Gamer** in stock.



elegant lighting effects beam through the supports.

On ground level there wouldn't be so much of a problem, but if Aiden is looking down from an elevated position when he decides to have fun, there is suddenly a great deal more geometry in play and consequently much more for the frame-rate to get spooked by.

Although primarily developed by Ubisoft Montreal, additional work is being carried out by Ubisoft Romania (of the Tom Clancy flight simulation *HAWX 2* fame), but more interestingly, the Ubisoft Reflections team will also be adding its even more specific expertise. With the involvement of the developer of the *Driver* series comes the promise of vehicles that will be as laden with as many physical properties as possible. Not just in the way cars handle when pushed to their limit, but in the manner that they fall apart when they strike (or are struck by) other objects.

PARALLEL LINES

It's certainly not beyond reason to picture a game dealing with a pile-up 30 cars deep. But when the game must calculate the position of each of those cars, as well as accurately describe how they ended up in such a ruined condition, the maths is in

severe danger of going insane. And that's even before any processing has to deal with the behaviour of those oh-so individual civilians, or even the particle systems used to create rain that not only falls, but is blown around the Windy City.

Vehicular degradation has already been highlighted in stunning style by *Watch Dogs*' effortlessly cinematic gameplay trailers. And despite such snippets clearly being hand-crafted on hardware that few people own, the overall effect certainly meets Ubisoft's aspiration to provide cinematic action that would be more fitting in a Michael Mann action movie than one made by Michael Bay.

This won't be the first Ubisoft title to be inspired by the writer and producer of *Miami Vice*, of course. Most recently *Assassin's Creed III* famously and quite blatantly took a lot of inspiration from Mann's 1992 version of *The Last of the Mohicans*, even playing the film's musical score during press events. Neither will it be the first game to demonstrate a deep affection for his 1995 crime drama *Heat*, and its key fight and chase sequences, although we all remember how *Kane & Lynch* turned out.

But should Reflections' car physics and damage models maintain the high standards depicted in the "gameplay"



BOXES OF DELIGHTS

Before you get too excited we should pointed out that this screenshot comes from the PlayStation4 version of the game, but that doesn't really matter as we are more interested in what it depicts rather than how it does so. Fundamentally, all versions will be the same; some will just look scrappier than others because life is harsh. So why our interest in this image?

You can see precisely why Pearce's ability to cause serious power surges at selected electricity box things can come in particularly handy when you want to have a quiet word in someone's ear but they decide they'd rather scarp. It's like the city of Chicago is full of remote controlled electro-mines that can be detonated at will.

Such a neat hack isn't instantaneous, unfortunately – it will take you about two seconds to access and activate a targeted device, so you'll have to get your timing skills down. But you can use that time to wonder why a city so obsessed with technology is yet to develop anything as handy as a circuit breaker. Good job it hasn't, mind you – people don't generally stop running just because they smell ozone and the whiff of burning plastic.

trailers, and be matched by gunplay and visual flair, *Watch Dogs* could well be the first open-world game to truly expand on the chaotic, yet highly choreographed beauty of the stand-out Michael Man gunfight, still widely regarded as one of Hollywood's best. There will be such violence, but often the action will be of a more subtle style than you'd usually get when given free rein in a massive city.

CHARLES BRONSON

You see, Aiden Pearce is a man on a revenge mission – people from his past are being attacked and killed and he's become so paranoid that he even monitors his own family via a variety of devices. It may look as though Aiden carries a fancy Samsung mobile phone, but it's actually a very specific piece of kit called a Profiler, and as the story develops so do the Profiler's powers as new apps are developed. There's a cost for using it, of course – battery power.

It's incredibly useful for jamming communication signals, stopping subway trains, altering traffic lights, raising bridges and street barriers and even causing pipes and control

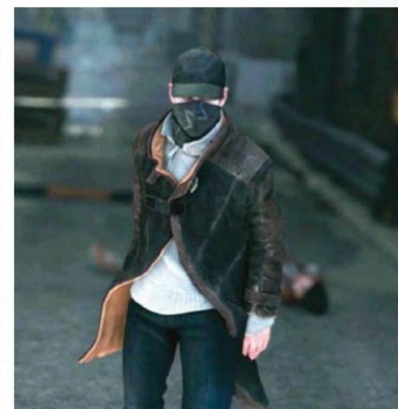
"WHY PROVIDE HACKERS WITH LOTS OF WEAK DOORS IN MANY LOCATIONS, WHEN YOU CAN CREATE A SINGLE MASSIVE AND HEAVILY PROTECTED ONE?"

boxes to rupture and explode. But it's the Profiler's access to a database that holds information on every citizen in the city that will truly fuel Pearce's ever-growing vigilante urges. He will notice when a certain person seems to be loitering with some form of intent, for example, and call up their criminal record to see if they've got any history. And should a convicted rapist be seen following a woman into an alleyway then it's very obvious that something should be done by a citizen with the power to do so.

It will then be possible to follow the potential perpetrator and administer the kind of justice that only someone equipped with the right information and martial art skills can deliver, or even go further and place a gun against the back of their head and pull the trigger. The only problem being that the potential perp might live down the alleyway and merely be following his sister home for an evening of wine and *The Apprentice*.



ABOVE: Ideally it will be possible to get yourself arrested for texting while at the wheel or handlebars.



RIGHT: Buy the Vigilante Edition and this look could be yours – only with a *Watch Dogs* logo slapped right across your forehead.



"Watch Dogs could be the first open-world game to truly expand on the chaotic, choreographed beauty of the stand-out gunfight in Heat that's still regarded as one of Hollywood's best"



MULTIPLAYER 2.0

Watch Dogs will certainly be bringing a lot of extra fun to the usual single-player lonely party, but its online modes could well redefine what to expect from social play in the future. Sure, you'll be able to join competing sides and get to see your character in action just as you would see Pearce in the main game. You'll be able to hack and be hacked, too, but we're looking to multi-platform matches to see some pretty major differences.

We're not just talking 360 vs PS4 vs PC play; if you have a smartphone or an iPad you'll be able use it to interact, too, and in a variety of ways that fit the game's themes perfectly. Forget interactive SmartGlass maps and ready yourself for proper handheld gameplay mechanics, as well as unique challenges that will further immerse you into *Watch Dogs*' murky world. Your friend could be playing in their front room and you could bust their chops while catching the bus. Aces.

If Aiden makes the wrong call, he will be in severe danger of being sought for murder. Any witnesses, be they human or electronic, will be keen to pass on the information and so, while street justice will be possible, it won't come without the potential to severely backfire.

Mr Pearce isn't your usual clearly defined hero - his motivations may be decent but his means may not always justify the ends, although that doesn't mean he can afford to go *Wild Bunch* at any opportunity. There's collateral damage as well as further ramifications to consider, which is why taking time to perform considered actions will be necessary to retain his anonymity... and he might also want to consider a change of clothes now and then.

URBAN OUTFITTERS

Videogame characters have to be easily identifiable in order to offer brand awareness. They need to be instantly recognisable, not just so they stand out in their own world but so they can make an impression in

a world of other characters and be made into figurines that are sold with special editions.

With this in mind we still have to wonder (yet already know) why Aiden Pearce has decided to not just wear any old baseball cap, but one that displays *Watch Dogs*' logo. Wearing a sporty hat in a city full of similarly attired people makes sense if you don't want to stand out, but making one that a witness could easily draw and show to the police? You may as well be an assassin in white robes strolling through a city full of people in colourful clothes.

As the game is all about blending into a modern city and attempting to remain unnoticed while executing devious schemes, such dedication to an old gaming paradigm certainly raises questions that might be answered by the occasional change of jacket or headgear. So far the ability to go unnoticed has only been explained by Pearce covering the lower part of his face and looking as if he should be hurling a bunch of flowers at a line of riot



We'd give this this PS4 image a Physics rating of 10 – expect the 360 version to not be so pretty.



ABOVE: KITT, is that you? What did they do with the Hoff?



BELOW: The police helicopters are like tyrannosaurus in that you can remain hidden from them if you stand still.

police in a famous Banksy stencilling. The look certainly helps Ubisoft convey *Watch Dogs'* anti-establishment ethos; it's just not one that anyone would actually adopt, should they need to remain unnoticed.

That said, having to constantly be concerned with your current state of fashion would turn the game in the direction of the many others that place boutiques on the streets and ask you to give a damn. Having to change your duds specifically to avoid facing dire consequences would break the flow of play. And there's also every chance that the money Pearce can gain from automated teller machines for free (should he have hacked a customer's PIN) can be spent on more than guns, ammo, coshes and long-life batteries, and he can indeed swap his logo-covered cap for something less recognisable – although such touches are far from essential.

Watch Dogs is aiming for a highly cinematic, modern noir look. And if the Xbox 360 version can follow the imagery that has so far been released



in a manner that doesn't suggest far too great a level of detail has been lost then, silly hats or not, it's one of the top games of 2013 to look out for and might well be the year's killer app. As Aiden Pearce says in a trailer, he's not out of control – he's never *had* so much control. Out just two months after *Grand Theft Auto V*, we're just hoping that Ubisoft's new intellectual property is ready for a fight. It's most certainly got the technology. ■



MADDEN NFL 25

PUBLISHER:
EA Sports
DEVELOPER:
EA Tiburon
RELEASED:
27 August 2013



Don't panic, you haven't just woken up from a 12-year coma – the '25' in the title marks Madden's quarter-century anniversary in delivering the finest NFL action to games consoles. And, as some of you who have enjoyed one or two of those games over the years will recognise, the cheery chap in the photo is Detroit Lions' legendary running back Barry Sanders – the man voted as the cover star of this landmark addition to the long-running series.

He took 58% of the final vote in a showdown with the Minnesota Vikings' Adrian Peterson, after seeing off the likes of Joe Montana and Jerry Rice before that. Which just about makes him as popular as the Madden franchise itself; a franchise that continues to dominate the market (for better and for worse) and even manages to sell a fair few copies here in the UK as well.

Madden NFL 25 isn't resting on its former glories, though, and is bringing a whole bunch

of new moves and refinements into play – not least the Infinity Engine 2 upgrade for improved physics and adding more weight and variety to those power moves. You'll be able to make harder cuts for a more natural change of direction (both offensively and defensively), there's a new precision modifier to make nailing those plays and combos even sweeter and there are 30-odd new moves to toy with. Happy anniversary, Mr Madden – it's always a pleasure. ■

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A character in a dark, hooded robe with a white fur collar, holding a flaming torch and a sword, stands on a wooden plank bridge in a dark, rocky cave. The title "BRAVE TRIALS AND FATAL ERRORS" is overlaid in large, white, bold letters.

BRAVE TRIALS AND FATAL ERRORS

GAZE TOO LONG INTO THE ABYSS THAT IS *DARK SOULS* AND NOT ONLY WILL IT STARE BACK, IT'LL POKE SOMETHING HORRIBLE IN YOUR EYE. SO WHAT WILL ITS SEQUEL BRING TO EASE THE PAIN – AND ARE THE RUMOURS THAT PRE-ORDERS COME WITH FREE CUDDLES IN ANY WAY VALID?

PUBLISHER:
Namco Bandai

DEVELOPER:
From Software

RELEASED:
TBC

"Many game designers are all too imprisoned by narrative and plot that they risk predictability, and so the greatest tool for narrative is a world created for it to exist within."

Now let's be honest and fair; those words weren't really put together by our delicate hands but are actually the result of cheeky tailoring and slight modification of two separate tweets, crafted with great precision and sent flying into the digital ether by Hidetaka Miyazaki – director of PlayStation 3-exclusive *Demon's Souls*

and then the multi-format and thus more widely appreciated *Dark Souls*. What a hero.

Hollywood-hurrah and the gallingly unwavering need to channel players through heavily scripted stories are elements that have a place, no doubt, but certainly aren't what games need to be so constantly concerned with or imprisoned by – although they all too often are. Computer technology, cunning level design as well as direct human interaction can promote so much greater immersion and provide

worlds that, through exploration and emotional involvement, will stimulate the imagination. Moreover, it'll inspire a need to progress in far greater a manner than when someone just sits you down and doesn't tell a story but rather *shows* it to you.

Let players discover an adventure for themselves and get lost along the way, and when they die they won't just curse the death of a character and their own apparent ineptitude. They'll feel it right in their gut, and be rocked by the heavy gnaw of personal doom, and will want to do better next time, once they've had a cup of tea and let their heart settle down.

Technically an action-RPG set in a medieval fantasy world and equipped with the nastiness of a survival-horror, *Dark Souls* certainly contains stories to discover and a central plot to unwind, but these are not placed at its front and highlighted, nor is the game at all concerned with spoon-feeding any genuine assistance.

Indeed, the game manual fails to illuminate much and there's no real in-game guidance through its intricately constructed and consistently moody settings at all. Save for hints, tips and often downright lies written on its floors by other players, whose deaths you can learn from by activating the patch of blood they left behind and watching their ghosts fight unseen assailants – or, more amusingly, seeing



RIGHT: Respect for even imagining that a bow and arrow will be of much use here.

It will still be about finding and lighting fireplaces – and so also about making every damned monster respawn.



them simply get cocky and run off a high ledge.

Similarly you can expect just as much mystery, depth and sense of unease from its sequel, *Dark Souls II*. Although still haunting the production by acting as its supervisor (and happy to tweet his thoughts), Hidetaka Miyazaki is no longer sitting in the director's chair. Instead, Tomohiro Shibuya and Yui Tanimura will carry on pretty much where he left off and bring with them their experience from involvement in the development of such almost similar titles as the Monster Hunter games, *Resident Evil Outbreak* and the quite different, though still reliant on customisation, Armored Core series.

For fans, the greatest fear instilled by this new partnership comes not

from a whole new set of ways to die (of which there will be many) but that, by placing Miyazaki in the background, From Software could be aiming at a mainstream audience. And the easiest way to cater for mainstream tastes is to do the unforgivable and insert an Easy mode that goes totally against the very essence of Dark Souls' reason for existing.

Dilute its challenge and diminish the danger and it becomes a standard, though charismatic, dungeon crawler that's a bit like a crushingly depressed Zelda. So here's another tweet from Miyazaki that makes us feel all gooey inside: "A sense of achievement is worth more than points from unlocking an achievement or trophy."

In *Dark Souls* you get a sense of achievement from just existing in



ABOVE: Someone's been experimenting on dragons and even their fleshless bones can pose a threat.

BELOW LEFT: Bad dog! There are no cute pooches for petting in this town.

its dank, gloomy and spectacularly dangerous world for slightly longer than you did the last time. While its toughness comes from limited restart points, a lack of multiple save slots, your hero's ability to be killed with a single strike and from paying heavily for stupid mistakes and complacency, but most importantly it comes from learning from those mistakes. Fail to



Dragons were all but extinct in *Dark Souls'* Kingdom of Lordran, but then the sequel isn't set there. We'd say it's set on the same planet, if that helps, but even that doesn't mean it will share lore or bestiaries. But we'll say with confidence that it will feature dragons – though this here isn't one of them.

Other winged beasts will exist and in this screenshot one of them is in the process of destroying your chances of making it across the rope bridge. Indeed, when it lands it will snap asunder and send you plummeting to yet another death. So what's the alternative – presumably it's a bridge that must be crossed at some point?

Well, when demonstrated, even the developers had yet to decide, though *Demon's Souls* featured a battlement that was regularly strafed with fire. So we would imagine that successful traversal here will similarly require observations or timing... or maybe not.





"Veterans shouldn't expect Dark Souls II to sell them out; the series' core values will remain, and proudly so. It's still to be a nightmare that will hold its secrets even after multiple completions"

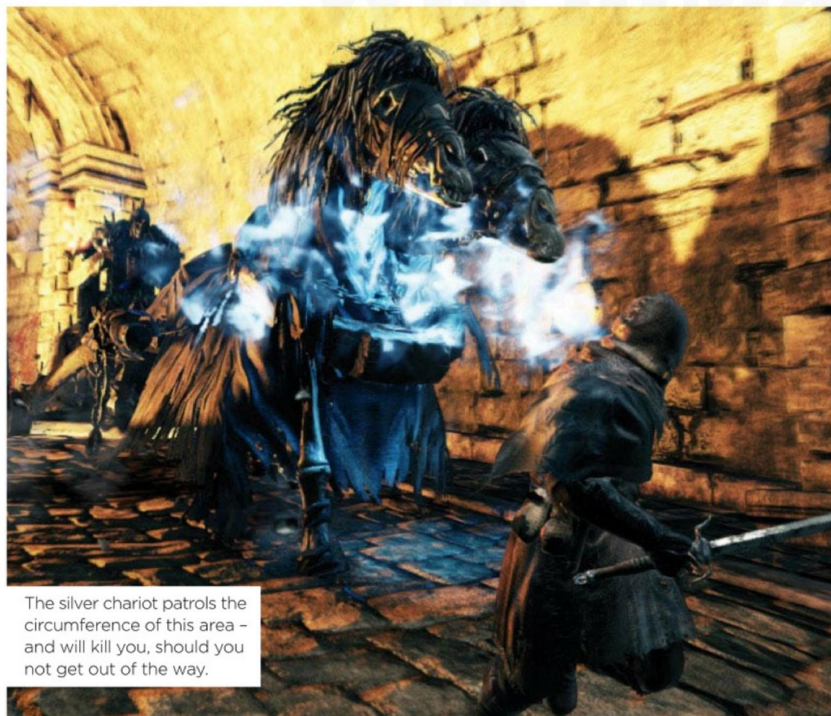


pay attention and stumble, rather than persevere up its steep learning curve, and you will suffer. But to actually find this curve you've got to understand a great deal that's never explained in any useful detail.

Thankfully Tanimura has gone on record to confirm that there won't be an Easy option and that, aside from some modifications (like a mass of new moves promoted by the dual-wielding of certain weapons), the combat system will remain much as it was. It's still going to be a game that will happily and repeatedly punch you in the face with a spiked gauntlet, so you should still Prepare to Die and die again. It's just that the sequel's opening sections won't be primed with quite so many traps or enemies that can pound you into the paving as soon as notice at you.

For the uninitiated among you, such a dampening will provide at least some measure of breathing space where only the general concept of blocking with a shield and slashing with a sword or blasting with magic will be immediately familiar. The bleakness can be taken in, the surroundings explored and the new, smoother and more detailed graphics engine enjoyed, while the controls are better understood and sub-menus and stats more considered.

Players won't be battered by an epic degree of seemingly spiteful cruelty so early on, though they will feel the



The silver chariot patrols the circumference of this area – and will kill you, should you not get out of the way.

looming fear that's inherent in the environments. Terror is inescapable as it practically seeps from the walls; the horror and suspense will not only be maintained but amplified – and importantly, they won't be as quick to give up.

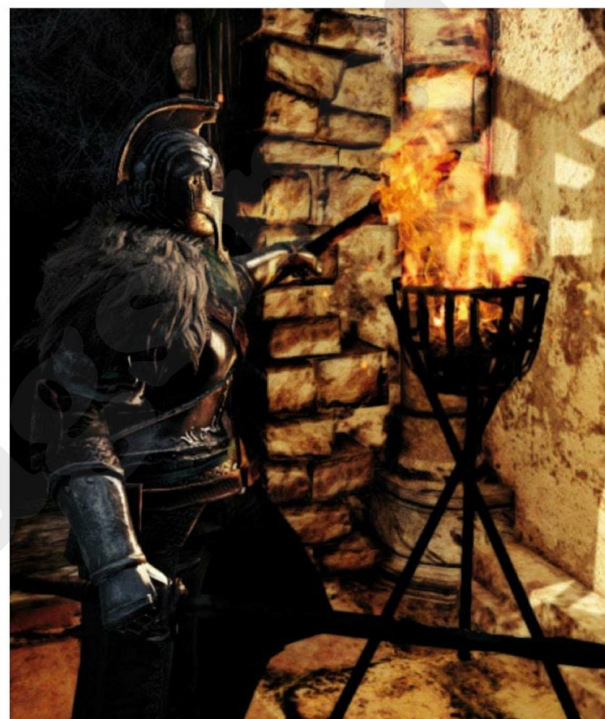
But what of all those players who have persevered with the first game and helped contribute to its 2.3 million units sold? Well, they can look forward to denser surroundings to uncover as the tempo of the violent encounters steadily increases, and they'll already be skilled enough to deal with the re-worked Player Versus Player combat and feel the benefit of new dedicated servers. They might even consider that the replacement for the first game's Covenant system really did need to be easier to grasp, since when you have to venture onto the internet to find out such things you're breaking from your direct involvement with the game – and that's not ideal.

"A well designed world could tell its story in silence", tweeted Miyazaki. And it is this desire to let the player discover the game's new secrets for themselves that means the developer is similarly keen to remain enigmatic. We know that enemies will now be able to break through walls and smash more than just crates and tables, and that more of them will be ready to annihilate you by countering the usual tactics. Some will be able to hurl their weapons, for

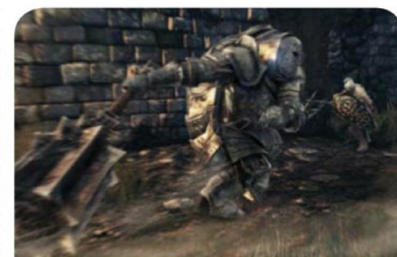
example. Others will purposely fall on their heavily armoured backs and flatten you with their gargantuan mass should you attempt a backstab. And then there is what seems a very small addition that could well prove to be massive: torches.

Although often set where light was low and despite its name, *Dark Souls* didn't play with darkness as much as might have been expected, especially considering that it's out to put slivers of ice down your spine. In *Dark Souls II* you'll encounter areas where your eyes will never acclimatise, so without finding and then lighting a torch on a brazier you'd be ill-advised to venture forth. And even then, your troubles are far from over.

So there you are with your trusty blade or magical weapon in one hand, flaming light source in the other, still proceeding in full knowledge that it's highly likely that something lurking in the flickering shadows will attempt

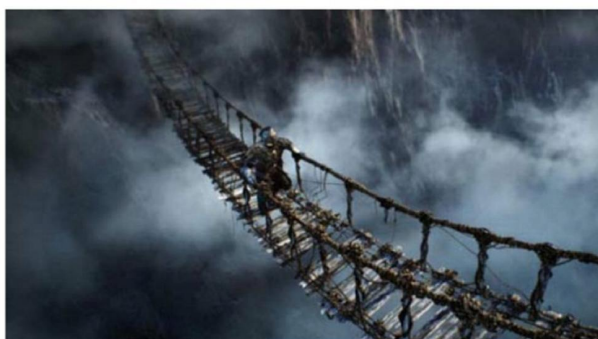


ABOVE: A brazier next to a darkened corridor? Well if that isn't the handiest *Dark Souls* has ever been.



EXTREME BACK PAIN

This eager lummoxx of an enemy uses its mace to deliver a ridiculous amount of damage in a short space of time, so you will probably consider a frontal attack to be inadvisable. How about all that turtle-like armour on its back, though – surely that means a backstab wouldn't be that effective? Well you'd be right but in the wrong way, so no points for showing your workings-out. Turtle-troll-guy denies rear entry not just because of the obvious protection, but because it will fall on you should you move behind it – the bastard.



"COMBAT WILL BECOME DEEPER AND DEADLIER, WHILE THE ARCHITECTURE WILL BE MORE LABYRINTHINE AND OFFER GREATER COMPLEXITY"



BELOW RIGHT:
Unless you've got some severe fire-resistance, falling from here would be inadvisable.



LUNGE FOR LIFE

All swords are not the same – and that goes for weapons of every type. This rapier provides a thrust that you'd usually get from using a spear but certainly wouldn't be able to perform with a scimitar. We know this because that's how *Dark Souls* worked – and by observing how those being attacked don't seem to have left their defences open, having had their own strikes countered.

While the original game did enable you to hold onto two weapons at once, the sequel will layer extra manoeuvres only available, say, when you have a dagger and sword in your hands. Not only do weapons bring new moves then, you'll also have to contend with new combinations of them.

to snuff out your existence and ruin a good 20 minutes of hard-earned momentum. But at least you've come prepared, right... just not quite as you once were.

These torches can't be dangled from a chain on your waist and so, when you're holding one, you're not holding a shield. Not only are your potential defences now at a minimum and reliant on armour and dodges, should you become embroiled in a battle you might well decide to drop the torch and cycle through other more aggressive defensive options. Do so and it won't remain there burning away on the ground, it'll instantly fizzle out – and even the most experienced *Dark Souls* player will be aware that fighting in total darkness can only mean fatal things.

Veterans should not expect *Dark Souls II* to sell them out, then. They should also expect the combat to eventually become more frequent than it was and to be deeper and deadlier, while the architecture will be more labyrinthine and offer greater complexity and far more routes to uncover. The series' core values will remain – and proudly so. It's still to be a nightmare that will hold its secrets even after multiple completions, so we'll leave you with one final tweet from Hidetaka Miyazaki to keep you primed: "Dragons can be vehicles. #darksouls2".

You can ride dragons? Seems so – though not, we counter, without going through a hell of an ordeal first. And no, pre-orders will not be coming with free cuddles. ■



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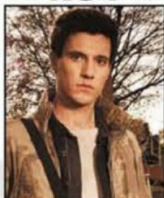
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EPISODE IV: A NEW HOPE?

PUBLISHER:
Deep Silver

DEVELOPER:
Volition

RELEASED:
23 August 2013

SAINTS ROW HAS LOST THE PLOT. AS IN, IT HAS *COMPLETELY* LOST THE PLOT; THE US PRESIDENT HAS SUPERPOWERS AND IS FIGHTING ALIENS WITH A COMBINATION OF TELEKINESIS AND DUBSTEP. SO IS THIS A NEW HOPE OR NO HOPE FOR FINALLY TRUMPING GTA?

The story is well known by now. With THQ haemorrhaging cash, it needed to pump titles out as fast as it could to make money wherever possible. Thus a standalone DLC entry based on *Saints Row: The Third* (think *Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon* or *Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare*) was sprinting through the lab – DLC called *Enter the Dominatrix*.

But when things began getting truly bleak over at Toy Headquarters, *Saints Row IV* was fast-tracked into development – and it was announced that *Enter the Dominatrix* would be conveniently “incorporated” into the

sequel. You don’t have to read too far between the lines to see what happened behind the scenes. The fact that THQ couldn’t wait a few months until the next generation to release a fully realised sequel is indication enough of how desperate things were. As is the fact that *Saints Row IV* would now find itself being released head to head against the title that it so badly wants to be, *Grand Theft Auto V*.

Things are different now, though. THQ is dead, so there’s no longer an imperative to rush a half-baked game out of the door just to put 10p in the

meter. The franchise and Volition belong to Deep Silver (well, its parent company Koch Media), which really would be far better advised to keep the title incubating in development for at least another six months so that we aren’t left with yet another half-assed Saints game that’s destined to score between a **7** and an **8**.

Deep Silver already has a bunch of titles on its hands that could have done with longer in the oven. *Dead Island Riptide* (page 88) needed patching almost as badly as its predecessor. *Metro: Last Light* (page 80) has fallen far from the tree of

BELOW: Fear not – you’ll still be able to dress as daftly as your heart desires. And mostly in hues of purple.





awesome that bore the original. And now it's going to send *Saints Row IV* – a game that, its glorified DLC-ness notwithstanding, remains the most divisive entry in the series yet – out to slaughter against the very game that it sets out to lampoon, while ending up being more a parody of itself in the process.

Somebody should tell Deep Silver that just because it bought the assets, doesn't mean it has to *behave* like THQ did. Don't get us wrong – we like *Saints Row*. We have done ever since the first entry. But our review of the last game may as well be a review of the entire series so far: "Muddled, erratic, eccentric, psychotic."

"The last two key descriptions for this open-world and tongue-in-cheek gangsta-thon are blatantly intentional, the first two seem to come from the mad giddy rush to get the code into the shops and are clearly accidental... Grand Theft Auto's underdog remains so, despite being dressed up in a far greater series of ridiculous and occasionally politically insensitive outfits, and is bug-bitten, flatulent and prone to a slack bladder. Oh, how we wish it wasn't so."

"WITH YET ANOTHER ABBREVIATED DEVELOPMENT CYCLE, WILL SAINTS IV BE ANY BETTER PLACED TO FINALLY DELIVER ON THE SERIES' PROMISE?"

Whatever you may think about the increasingly ludicrous, outlandishly pastiched, throw-everything-at-the-wall-and-see-what-sticks approach, *Saints Row IV* has all the ingredients for a rootin'-tootin' open-world adventure. The storyline is knowingly daft. The gameplay pickpockets every great sandbox game from Prototype to Crackdown (the trailer even cheekily alludes to "Cracking down on illegal aliens"). And the humour, basic though it largely is, could still make a stone wall giggle (come on – a dubstep gun is pretty frickin' funny).

The question is, with yet another abbreviated development cycle, will the fourth outing really be any better placed to deliver on the series' promise to either 1) be a true GTA-beater or 2) stand on its own merits as an open-world opus? Time will tell, of course, though we really wish there was more time between now and the telling. Still, for the moment, the latest footage fills us with enough optimism to state that *Saints IV* will deliver more dizzying excess and shamelessly over the top fun than ever before.

You are, as always, the leader of the Third Street Saints – only now you're



ABOVE: If you've been waiting since 1993 for the perfect game to recite the best line from *Last Action Hero*, your wish has come true.

also the President of the United States of America, too. It's probably best not to ask. All you need to know is that you're back in Steelport (which has taken on a distinctly Washington DC-esque vibe (no, not a purple one)) and, as some sort of bizarre coronation, an



DO IT FOR UNCLE SAM

It's yet to be announced over here (though we suspect it's only a matter of time), but you'll no doubt be able to buy it as DLC after the fact anyway. Either way, pre-ordering *Saints Row IV* at retailers in the States will entitle you to a "free upgrade" to the Commander in Chief Edition.

This pimps your purchase with a number of in-game goodies, chief (badum-tush!) among them the Uncle Sam Suit. This doesn't appear to bestow any particular abilities or buffs, so it's a good thing that you also get 'Merica – "the best (read: most ridiculously overpowered weapon ever conceived) fighting tool available". This bad boy packs flamethrowers, dubstep guns, rocket launchers and a minigun, complete with a stars and stripes paintjob.

And last but not least, you also get an aircraft worthy of taking out all those alien terrorists: the Screaming Eagle Jet, which "fires rockets out of its talons and can invoke the 'Sonic Scream' attack, leaving your enemies dazed, confused and likely scarred for life." Ah, America – f**k yeah.



ABOVE: Just your (Proto)typical bad guy in need of a presidential kicking.

alien invasion breaks out the moment you're sworn into office. Or the moment you swore in your office – we're sure it's the same difference.

Somewhere along the way you also gain superpowers, too. Again, ask no questions and we'll tell no lies. The important thing is that they turn you from a common or garden thug into a Marvel Comics reject, capable of kicking the ass of all six Avengers while flipping them off and assaulting their eardrums with caustic wub-wub music. All while dressed in the silliest outfits imaginable, to boot.

The Prez kicks men in the nuts so hard that he sends them hurtling across rooftops. Like Superman (and *exactly* like the Agents in Crackdown) he can leap tall buildings in a single bound – and then come crashing down

with a ground pound that annihilates anyone nearby. He also has a neat line in pro wrestling moves, from flying headscissors (which sees him tilt-a-whirl around an enemy's head, grinding his nuts in their face before corkscrewing them ass over teakettle) to Alabama Slams (grab 'em by the ankles and slam them over your head, face-first, like a snapping mousetrap) to the gold old fashioned clothesline across the face.

He can also fly (well, perhaps *glide*) and has a handy telekinesis power that enables him to levitate objects and slam them around the place. Sometimes that means killing some innocent bystanders (like hookers on street corners, who you can pick up and smash right into cars or buildings), other times it means something a little bigger. For example, if you're being fired upon by two alien attack ships, you can "use the Force" to grab hold of one of them and then hurl it at the other like a baseball to destroy them both.

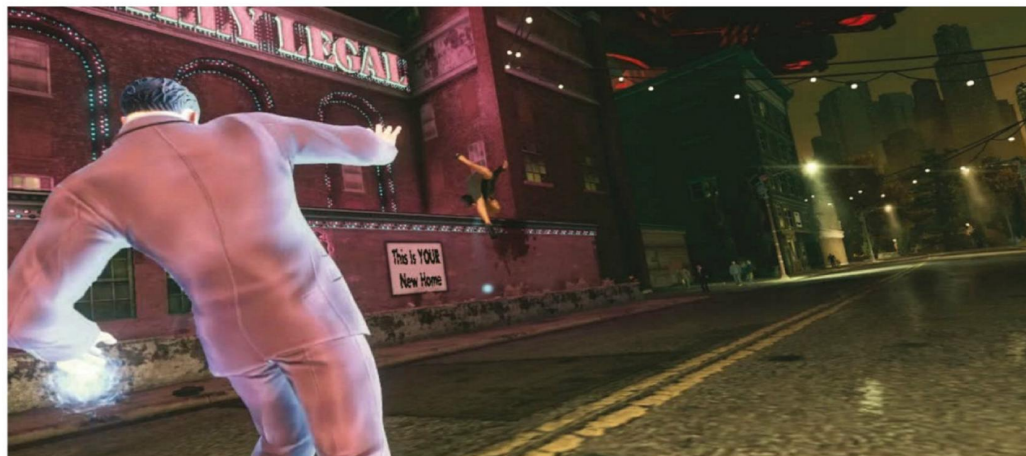
Having gone from ripping off Grand Theft Auto to ripping off Crackdown and the Jedi, you can see that *Saints Row IV* has not only lost the plot – it's done lost its *shit*. But we have a feeling that, for acolytes of the Third City Saints, that's not a bad thing by any stretch of the imagination. Let's all just hope that Volition has spent as much time ironing out bugs as it has making dubstep-powered weaponry. ■



LEFT: What's the best way to tackle an alien spaceship? HEAD ON.



BELOW: Use the Force, Saints! Oh, Obi-Wan – if only you'd been more agreeable to splatting streetwalkers into the sides of buildings.





"Having gone from ripping off Grand Theft Auto to ripping off Crackdown and the Jedi, Saints Row IV hasn't just lost the plot - it's done lost its shit"

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Looks like Alan Wake is Alone in the Dark - again.

TAKING BACK THE ASYLUM

PUBLISHER:
Bethesda Softworks

DEVELOPER:
Tango Gameworks

RELEASED:
TBC 2014

BY THE PIERCING OF OUR TONGUES SOME CLASSICAL SURVIVAL-HORROR THIS WAY COMES - BUT IS IT TOO LATE TO SAVE A GENRE THAT LOST ITS WAY? WELL SHINJI MIKAMI BLOODY HOPES NOT...

Survival-horror games, oddly enough, should be about survival and horror, and being utterly convinced that caution, consideration and intelligence are your greatest weapons against maddening isolation and the deadly aggression of unknowable fiends bent on your demise.

They should be about being low on ammunition and means of sustenance, utterly absorbed in a stark and pitiless situation where hope is just another word for prayer - and prayers don't readily get answered. What they *shouldn't* concern themselves with are machine guns and bullets that get regularly dropped by riddled enemies who can be kicked back with ease. Because as soon as you have excessive power, the genre loses its point and much of its appeal.

You see, though such games often contain guns, they're just not really about shooting. Let's put it this way: when Cliff Bleszinski fell in love with

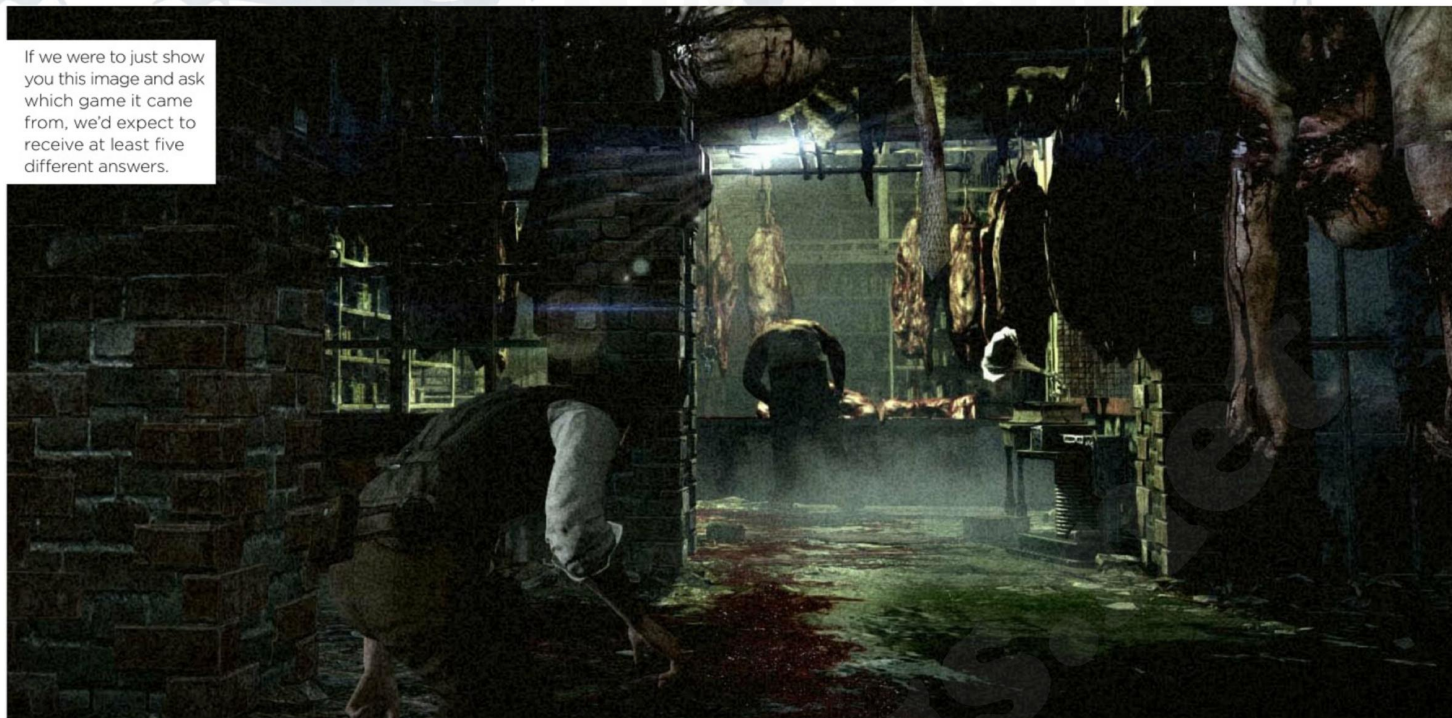
Resident Evil 4 his response wasn't to make a survival-horror game, it was to go out and make *Gears of War*. Which is why we'd suggest that it was by part four of Shinji Mikami's series that the genre had begun to forget its mind, despite its excellence.

It was also the last *Resident Evil* game that Mikami actually worked on, so it's not even as if he isn't partially responsible for the whole shift towards action. But he's obviously not happy with the deeper and unhindered thrust that the genre has taken towards gunplay and blasting of late. We don't even have to ask what he thought of *Resident Evil 6* and *Raccoon City*



It would probably be better to at least wait until the doughnut van arrives before venturing to certain death.

If we were to just show you this image and ask which game it came from, we'd expect to receive at least five different answers.



– he's pretty much making a game about his frustration.

So there are many reasons to be excited by the prospect of *The Evil Within* – Mikami's directorial role is obviously is a hell of a groovy plus. But even without him it's been a long time since any developer has just gone all-out to terrify its audience without feeling the need to also sate the player's ego-fuelled fantasy of being a tough guy with a big gun. There's *Silent Hill: Downpour* and then... what else? Action-horror and platform-horror, but no real survival-horror games.

The Evil Within is going to be a title that's very assured of the genre it belongs to, then. And from these early screenshots and the live-action reveal trailer, it really doesn't seem that afraid to be an amalgamation of well-worn tropes and textures. Coming across like a lost Clive Barker script, it tells the tale of detective Sebastian and his partner, who are requested to attend a crime scene at a local asylum. Ruined, bloodied bodies are lying everywhere – slaughtered as if in agonising sacrifice. After an examination of the massacre, other officers in attendance take turns

being similarly killed by the mysterious forces at play.

Sebastian is hit, loses consciousness, and then awakens alone in a twisted version of reality where weird creatures stalk the rust-stained and decaying corridors – weird creatures that thus far do seem to look mightily familiar. Not to Sebastian, you understand, but to the survival-horror genre and, more specifically, *Silent Hill*. There's also the definite tang of Hideo Nakata's *Ringu*, too (these are not problems, they're just, well, a bit cute).

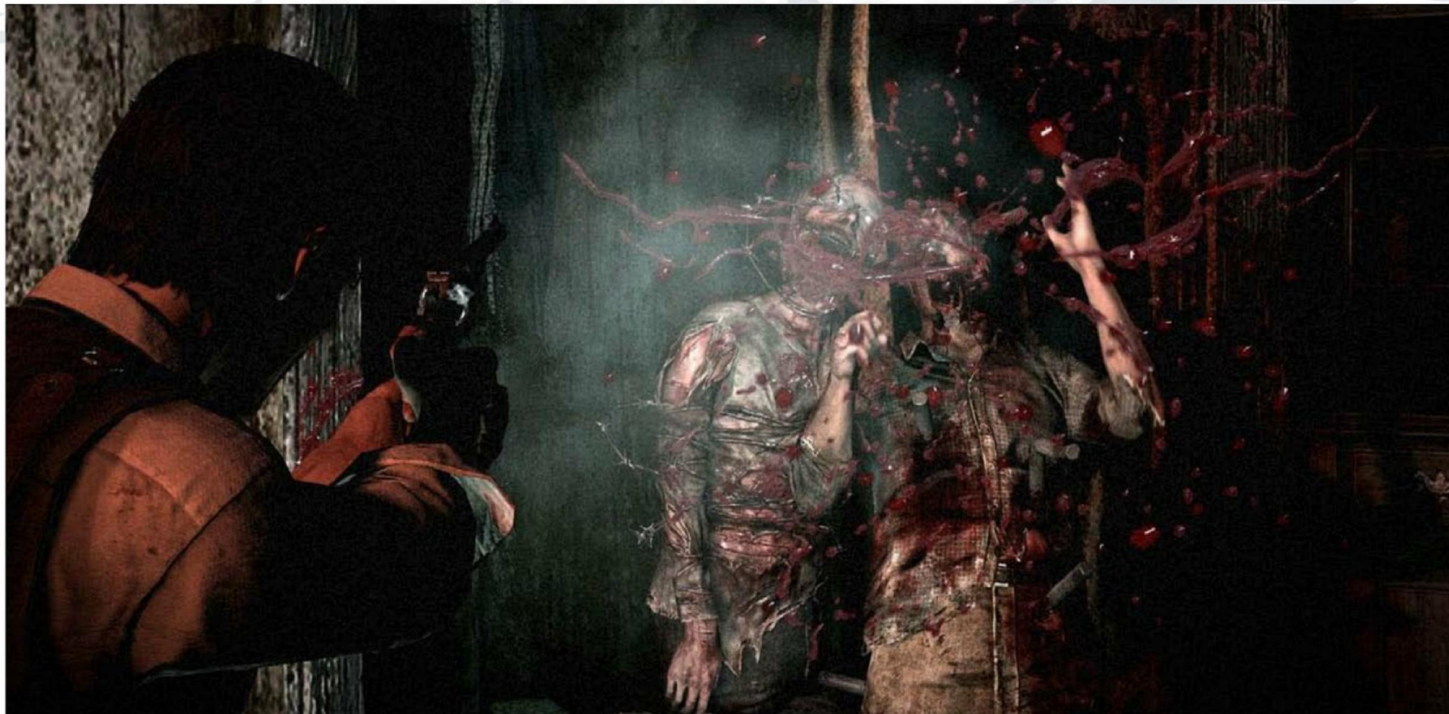
There's a massive hulk of a stalking monster who carries a hammer/axe/barbed wire thing, for example. Where he might have been wearing a large metal pyramid on his head had he appeared in a game by Konami, he has what appears to be an old-fashioned safe that no doubt contains secrets based on blood and tentacles – if the trailer can be trusted.

Do we really have to refer to him as Safe Head? That sounds more like a psychedelic music festival, for goodness sake, but if we must then so be it. Joining him to help form an eerily familiar menagerie of monsters is a woman that, fair enough, has four



RIGHT: When young girls with long hair can so easily impersonate a Swastika, you know it's time to run.

"WHEN CLIFF BLESZINSKI FELL IN LOVE WITH RESIDENT EVIL 4 HIS RESPONSE WASN'T TO MAKE A SURVIVAL-HORROR GAME, IT WAS TO GO OUT AND MAKE GEARS OF WAR"



ABOVE: Six shots divided by two bandaged demons equals pull back on the left stick - now!

arms. But she also has long dark hair that hangs down across her face as if she's just crept out of a haunted television screen.

Then there's the environment itself, and how it's all based around flickering fluorescent lights, white tiles fouled by brown, corrupted wood, flaking paint

and vicious metalwork that would set a health and safety inspector's notebook ablaze. At every turn so far shown, another box is ticked. But dig this: machine guns, packed magazines and the easy ability to shove enemies away from you with the casual press of a button will not be featuring - Mikami has stated as much.

There will be pistols, knives, axes, and (at an educated guess) crowbars, as well as horrible things with nails in them, but weaponry certainly won't be excessive nor resupplied in plentiful numbers. Sure, again that's a bit like a hill of the silent variety. But while traps can be wandered into Sebastian will also be able to create his own, luring enemies to their doom by running away and letting them give chase, rather than filling them so full of lead

that they stagger back into a pit of springs and blades.

It's exactly this building and tactical deployment of such nifty defensive measures that should make *The Evil Within* something more of its own thing. With a release date being just "sometime next year" there are also plenty of opportunities for new details to be released and for it to not to be so rammed with reflections of seen-before subject matter.

The only problem we envisage is that there's a reason Resident Evil went Rambo: financial returns. Shinji Mikami getting back into the genre he pretty much solidified should make every survival-horror fan unsettlingly moist, but Xbox Live Arcade would seem to be a far safer place to make such a comeback. ■



The live-action trailer is a lot more Christophe Gans than Paul WS Anderson and, considering that we wouldn't be shocked to see Milla Jovovich appearing as a playable character in *Resident Evil 7*, that's ruddy good news.

It's feature-packed with tired and wheezy clichés, mind you: old, withered, black and white photographs, spiky wire and quick edits, and an overall visual style that's part *Se7en*'s title sequence, part Nineties Nine Inch Nails music video. A gramophone playing Bach... stop, please, you're terrifying us! But mostly just making us think of Procol Harum's 1967 hit song alluded to in the title of this boxout (see, it does make some attempt at sense).

But being a live-action trailer for a Shinji Mikami survival-horror game, it's also a reflection on classic 1996 *Resident Evil* that just so happens to look more *Silent Hill* than it should do. The original game featured a live-action introduction sequence, remember. It was made of ham and cheese and the worst actors imaginable outside of cheap porn - but it was also quite, quite brilliant.



SUPERNATURAL: THE ANIME SERIES

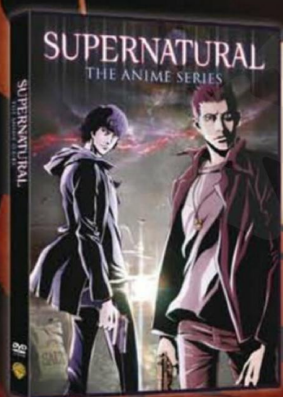
★★★★

"SLICK AND STYLISH"

SFX

"THIS IS STILL THE
SUPERNATURAL WE LOVE,
BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT"

SCIFI NOW



OUT ON DVD 27TH MAY

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HORROR'S SURVIVAL



BELOW: You don't always need a zombie or a malevolent spirit; sometimes a crazy person in a mask will do just fine.

SURVIVAL-HORROR USED TO BE ABOUT TREASURING EVERY SINGLE SCAVENGED BULLET, BUT THESE DAYS IT'S MORE ABOUT JETTISONING YOUR PAYLOAD LIKE AN APACHE GUNSHIP. WE LOOK AT THE GENRE'S PAST AND PRESENT WHILE PONDERING ITS UNCERTAIN FUTURE...

There was a time when survival-horror was a self-explanatory genre that was easy to identify. It was the one where you angled the shotgun towards the ceiling before blowing a zombie's head into a pixelated paste. It was the one where you wandered through foggy streets looking for clues to your adopted daughter's whereabouts while listening intently

to the crackling of your radio. And it was the one where the only way to avoid a paranormal molestation was to hold up your camera and hope your photography skills were more Peter Parker than Polaroid Pete.

That was survival-horror during its golden era, but these days it's all about the machine guns and Plasma Cutters. One person who is partly responsible for this slippery slope is the godfather of survival-horror himself, – Shinji Mikami. There's no denying that Mikami crafted two revolutionary games in both *Resident Evil 4* and the original, but when players got to go over-the-shoulder with Leon in a rural Spanish village far removed from the infected streets of Raccoon City, it was clear that this wasn't the *Resident Evil* we once knew.

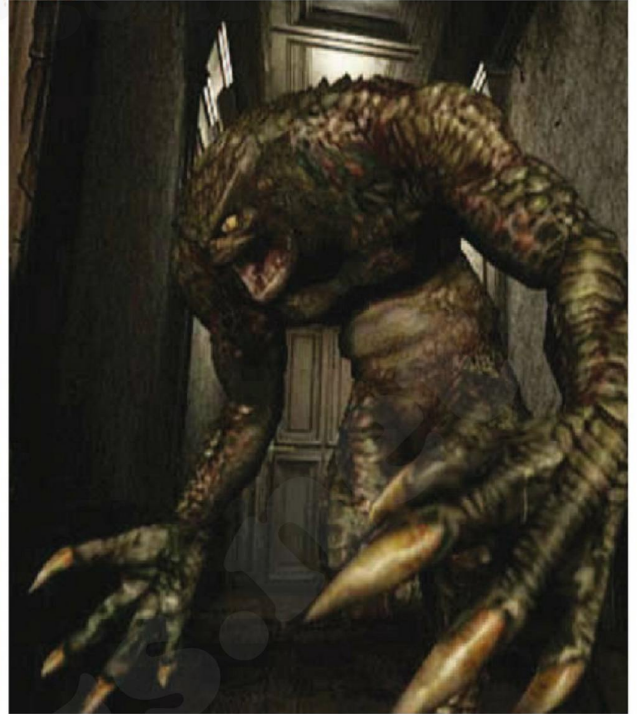
Fortunately this action-orientated experience turned out to be one of the greatest games of all time – the only downside was that it made the industry

forget about the true values of classic survival-horror. In more recent years, however, we've watched the *Resident Evil* series struggle with its own identity. That's not to say it hasn't flirted with experimentation before, as the spin-off *Survivor* and *Outbreak* series will certainly attest, but the shoehorning of vehicle and stealth sections in *Resident Evil 6* was a step too far for some. And the less said about *Operation Raccoon City*, the better.

Some would look to *Dead Space* as the modern day king of survival-horror. But no matter which way you cut it, the adventures of Isaac are more about mass carnage and extreme gore than clinging to life against a seemingly unstoppable horror. It's not that we don't enjoy the combination of precision gunplay and nightmare creatures, it's just that it doesn't lend itself to an oppressive sense of *fear*. Maybe this is why, after so many years away, Mikami is finally returning to



If you think that modern games just aren't scary enough then we suggest you play *Amnesia*. Watch out for the water...



"YOU TURN ON ALL THE LIGHTS BEFORE FORCING YOURSELF TO FACE WHAT HORRORS LIE BEYOND THE NEXT DOOR"

survival-horror with *The Evil Within* (back on page 28).

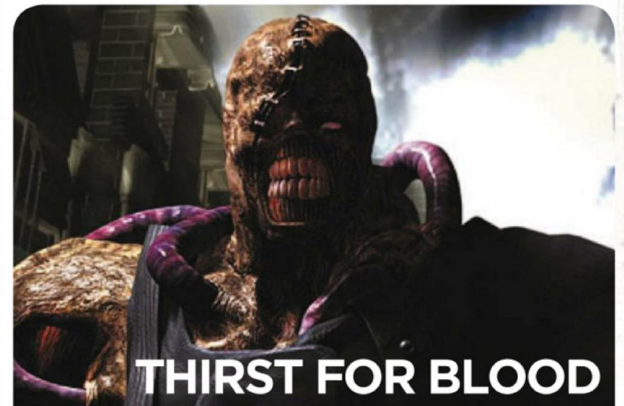
Could this be the game that brings back those moments of palpable fear? The kind where you turn on all the lights and take a deep breath before forcing yourself to face whatever horrors lie beyond the next door? We can't doubt the man who concocted the T-virus, but we just hope that his team can revitalise the classic template without diluting what made it so terrifyingly tense in the first place.

It's also important to consider the horror games that have appeared outside the console space. Anyone who has played *Amnesia: The Dark*

Descent or *Slender: The Eight Pages* knows that these PC titles have an undeniable fright factor. This is partly thanks to their evasive rather than combative gameplay; instead of tackling the horrors head-on with pockets full of lead, you must evade death by either hiding or staying one step ahead.

It's an elusive style of horror that was pioneered by the classic *Clock Tower* – a series that made its debut a whole year before *Resident Evil*. And yet, as thrilling as the hide-and-seek routine undoubtedly is, a true survival-horror should enable you to choose between fight and flight. It inevitably all boils

ABOVE: Do you remember the first time you came across one of these guys? Thank god we found that shotgun!



THIRST FOR BLOOD

Most gamers have heard of *Resident Evil*, *Silent Hill* and *Dead Space*, but while these are the fleshy poster boys of gaming's darkest genre there are many more to consider. But before Capcom invented the Jill sandwich, it had released a horror-themed RPG in 1989 called *Sweet Home* that was based on an obscure Japanese film. Then after *Alone in the Dark* launched in 1992, the hordes slowly massed.

Galerians mixed survival-horror with psychic powers back in 1998; *Deep Fear* enabled you walk and shoot in 1998; *Project Zero* swapped firearms for cameras in 2001; *The Thing* made you wary of your comrades in 2002; *Eternal Darkness* played devious mind games in 2002; *Forbidden Siren* had you seeing through the enemy's eyes in 2004; and *Rule of Rose* saw its UK release pulled due to its sexual undertones in 2006.





BELOW: It may have been more of an FPS, but there's no denying that *Clive Barker's Jericho* was pretty horrific.



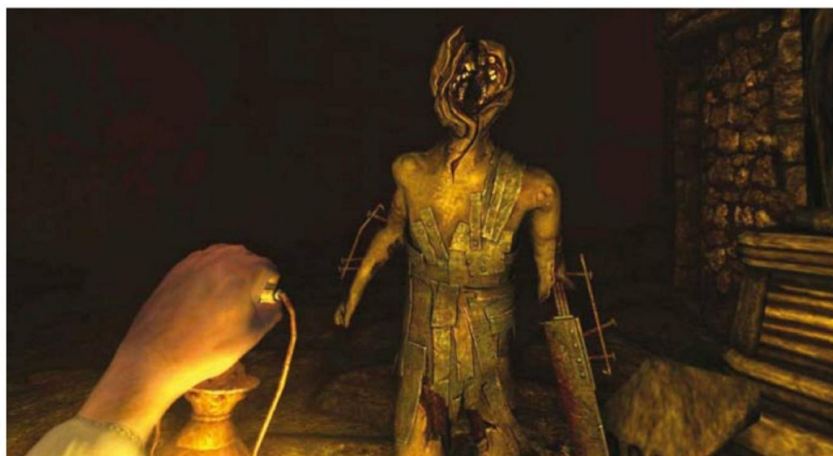
down to balance: you shouldn't have so much power that you essentially become a human threshing machine, mangling the monsters en masse while vacuuming up the ammunition that they bleed like candy, but at the same time you need to have something a little more potent than a plank with a rusty nail in it.

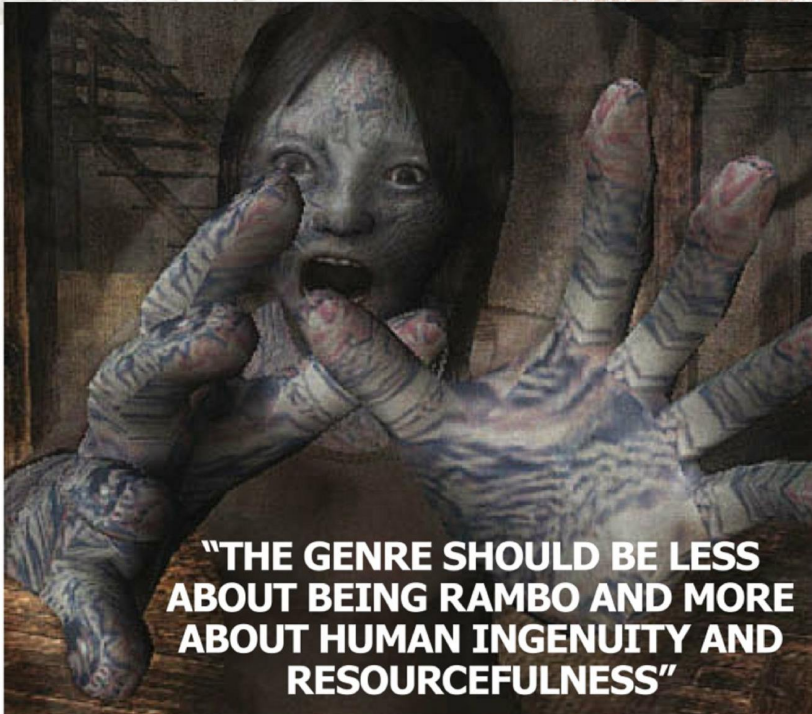
The genre should be less about being Rambo on Halloween night and more about human ingenuity and resourcefulness being put to the test against something terrifying yet surmountable. Regardless of whether the scares are physical, psychological or a combination of the pair, whatever lurks in the shadows needs to be the embodiment of fear.

In cinema, horror films have given us everything from demonic Deadites

and Cenobites to the mimicking alien parasites in *The Thing* and the more grounded terrors of the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. In terms of horror gaming's most infamous creations, Nemesis and Pyramid Head stand out as the most memorable – one is a stapled mass of bioengineered muscle that may (or may not) have been named after a famous British rollercoaster, while the other was the faceless manifestation of a man's guilt over killing his wife. Both of them hounded the player from start to finish and, although survival-horror doesn't demand a cat and mouse dynamic, it's very clear that zombies and giant spiders just don't cut it like they used to.

Another casualty of modern horror games is the limited puzzle-solving.





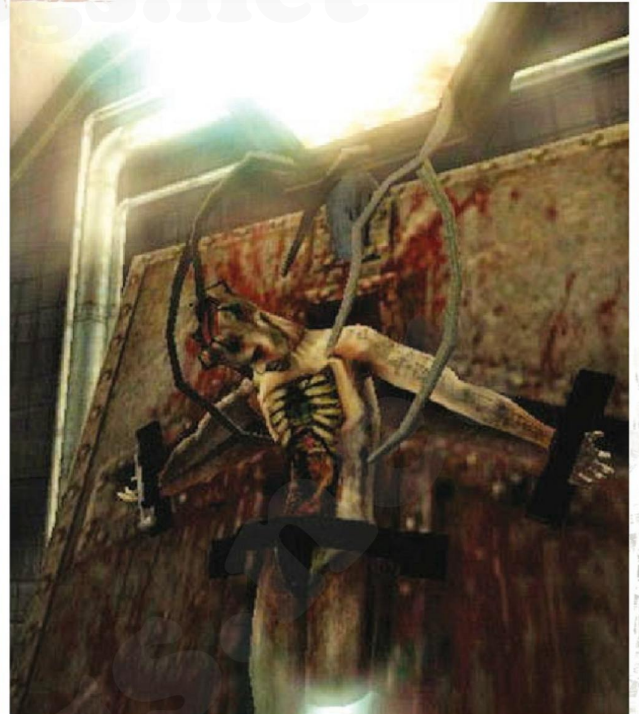
"THE GENRE SHOULD BE LESS ABOUT BEING RAMBO AND MORE ABOUT HUMAN INGENUITY AND RESOURCEFULNESS"

We're not saying that the genre needs to have Professor Layton-style brain teasers but, if games like *Uncharted* and *Condemned* have taught us anything, it's that a little investigative downtime can be a good way to break up the pace. You could also argue that while the haunted mansion setting has been done to death, there's something to be said for the more *Metroidvania* approach to level design. There's just nothing quite like barely surviving an encounter with a bloodcurdling beast and then being forced to retrace your steps back through its lair at a later point in the game. Knowledge can bring fear just as much as not knowing exactly what lurks around the next dimly lit corner.

If there's one cardinal sin that stops a survival-horror game from being a

stone cold chiller, it's the current trend for co-operative multiplayer. No matter how terrible a horror film is, you can guarantee it'll be magnitudes scarier if you watch it alone in the dark – it's a complete no-brainer. But when you bring a friend, AI or otherwise, along for the ride in a survival-horror game, the sense of isolation is lost and you're left with just a really good action game. This is essentially what happened with *Resident Evil 5* and *Dead Space 3* and, now we've been there and done that, we want to dive into the abyss without someone (as opposed to something) watching our back.

The main thing is that the survival-horror genre needs to stop following the Hollywood dream. Take *Amy* on Xbox Live; here was a game that could generously be described as



ABOVE: *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* is another survival-horror gem that draws upon the work of HP Lovecraft.

ABOVE LEFT: While *Resident Evil* is all about zombies and monsters, *Fatal Frame* goes all out with the paranormal.

a mechanical disaster but, despite its many crippling flaws, at least it tried to take the genre in a new and interesting direction. If this level of creativity can be applied to a game that treads an elegant line between empowerment and hopelessness while making you dread the thought of pushing further into the unknown, then maybe we'll finally see a survival-horror renaissance. We implore you, Mikami-san, to make it happen. ■



FEAR EFFECT

The dog jumping through the window is often credited as being one of the most terrifying moments in gaming. But for us it's the demonic piano that suddenly comes alive in the haunted house level of *Super Mario 64*. Maybe it was because we were very young at the time and just didn't expect it, but the first time that instrument suddenly leapt up and made a beeline for the world's most athletic plumber, our heart skipped a beat or three. After that, it's probably the eye-poking machine from *Dead Space 2*.



LEFT: Though not the best in the series, *Silent Hill 4*'s central room evoked an unsettling sense of claustrophobia.

NEWS

NEWS, VIEWS & LOOSENING
SCREWS FROM THE WORLD
OF XBOX 360



MAD WORLD

You can't even write "I'm shooting up my school tomorrow" while playing PC MMO *RuneScape* without the game's facilitators contacting the authorities and your ass getting arrested these days. Ask 18-year-old Massachusetts student Thomas Frongillo, for that's what happened to him... and he was studying Criminal Justice. Brilliant.



FINE CRISIS

Here's more jolliness from Massachusetts, this time it has to do with the witch hunt against violent videogames in the wake of the Sandy Hook massacre. Hilarious. Assemblywoman Linda Stender has introduced legislation that prevents rest stops, movie theatres, arcades and the like from hosting M-rated arcade games. Problem: the ESRB doesn't actually rate arcade machines.



THE EA-VILE EMPIRE

Remember all the gags about EA being "the evil empire"? Well the empire just struck back, because Disney has announced a new deal that sees EA getting the exclusive rights to make Star Wars videogames. BioWare, Visceral and DICE will be developing them, they will all be built using Frostbite 3 and they'll start arriving after April 2014. Cue the Imperial March...



THE MADDEN CROWD

LEGAL FEET MEET BALLS

You might know Electronic Arts as being a global interactive entertainment company that makes a lot of money, every single year, by releasing new and slightly adjusted entries of its sports game franchises. Such practices are what could well be considered "known knowns", right? There is no point crying about it - it's just what happens and we're all grown-ups here.

Well apparently crying about it could well be *exactly* the right thing to do - so long as you're crying with legal assistance, you live in and are a citizen of the United States and are pissed off with how EA's (American) football games dominate to such an extent that they effectively form a football game monopoly.

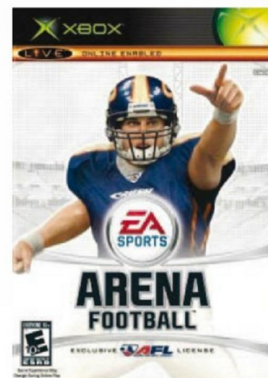
It goes a little something like this: back in 2011 a class action lawsuit was filed against EA that pretty much claimed such market dominance wasn't fair, that it denied competition and that it enabled the company to charge more money for the games than it would have had another publisher had the, ahem, balls to enter the same marketplace.

And it gets even better - American gamers who bought brand new copies of Madden NFL, NCAA Football or Arena Football for the Xbox, 360, PS2, PS3, GameCube, PC or Wii between 1 January 2005 and 21 June 2012 were given until 15 May 2013 to visit www.easportslitigation.com to make a claim.

Should the claim go on to be successful they could be awarded \$20.37 for each last-gen game from the list they bought and \$5.85 for every current-generation one, for a maximum of eight games. Presumably the amounts refer to how much money the consumers could have saved had someone else been making similar titles, and



ABOVE: Did you invent the prolate spheroid? Then you too may be able to claim oodles of wonga from EA.



RIGHT: Are you an American and bought a new copy of this before 21 June last year? Fill in a lot of forms and earn five bucks.

that those unhappy customers still have their receipts - nice.

It could be very costly for EA, then. But its football-based woes don't end there since, unless the mega-company settles out of court, a federal jury will be sitting down on 10 June to hear how Robin Antonick believes that he's due a truckload of cash too.

Antonick worked on the PC version of the very first *John Madden Football* back in the Nineties. Since then he's noticed that all console versions ever released have relied on his coding. Y'see, his contract didn't specify such use and so he wants some reimbursement in royalties - and given that the series has brought in \$4 billion, that could be quite a slice of pie. EA asked the judge to throw the case out for being crazy; interestingly, the judge didn't.

Next: disgruntled gamer sues another publisher for not making any football games whatsoever. Well, it could happen... but only in America. ■

BUZZER BEATERS

LAST-SECOND SHOTS THAT BEAT THE DEADLINE CLOCK THIS ISSUE

Rambo: The Video Game



The Wolf Among Us



Wolfenstein: The New Order



RIGHT: HMV first sold records on Oxford Street back in 1921 when records were made of crushed beetle shells.



BELOW: They'd call in Superman to help but he's still miffed about not being able to sell his old games to anyone but CEX Luthor.



HIS MASTER'S SAVIOUR INTERNET CONTINUES TO RUIN EVERYTHING

It's time to blow away the dust from the word 'beleaguered' yet again with fresh developments for high street retailer HMV. As you're probably aware, administrators were called in to sort out the beleaguered retailer on 15 January this year and restructuring firm Hilco UK consequently snapped up all its debts to the tune of around £110 million plus tax.

Since then redundancies had been made at HMV's head office and distribution centres, a bunch of stores were closed and six were picked up by supermarket chain Morrisons. Other stuff happened. Most importantly, STORES STOPPED BUYING SECOND-HAND GAMES. It was most frustrating as our local Game and Gamestation had also closed – we were the victims here.

Well on 05 April Hilco acquired HMV and saved about 2,500 jobs and 141 stores – praise the deaf Jack Russell! Though not quite; now 400 jobs are on the line and cashier, supervisor and guard roles are up for the chop. Debts have to be paid, so the next time you buy a Nirvana shirt and a really expensive copy of *LEGO Batman 2* you might actually find that you're being served by the store's manager, since they will be brought in to work the tills.

Clearly the bad times still aren't quite over, especially if you're a staff member. Big respect and fingers crossed to those who are, and here's hoping that the future gets brighter and that people stop using HMV merely as a way to see what they want to buy from Amazon. ■

PROMISE GOES POP

REBOOT OF ARABIAN PLATFORM HOPPER DENIED

Stop trying to imagine what a Prince of Persia game developed by Portsmouth's own Climax Studios would look like and fix your eyes on these screenshots. They come from a time when the *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories* developer was in talks with Ubisoft to revive the series – and very inviting they look, too.

Based on a prototype tech demo these screens certainly look the part, with special note going to what look like honest-to-goodness side-on sections that bring back fond memories of Jordan Mechner's 1989 original (and Live Arcade's *Prince of Persia Classic* from 2007).

Speaking to www.eurogamer.net, Climax CEO Simon Gardner explained that the prototype was

created during "exploratory discussions" with Ubisoft, but such discussions "never went any further" – not surprising, though slightly upsetting. In January Ubisoft Montreal head Yanniss Mallat explained that the series had been "paused". Those images for an Egyptian-themed Prince Of Persia that could have just been for a new IP called *Osiris* we ran a few issues back? They might never come to anything.

There's a reason that Ubisoft is wary of a new Prince game and that reason, we'd warrant, is called the Assassin's Creed series. Prince of Persia already runs through its veins, even if those veins will start swashing more buckles this November in *Black Flag*. ■

RIGHT: Our money is still on a Prince of Persia game being made for digital distribution.



ABOVE: That red sash really does add to the sense of movement, eh? It's almost like it was designed to.

PUSH OUR BUTTONS

What's put a verruca in our Cheerios this month? That **all online abuse is wrong...**

Shannon Sun-Higginson is a filmmaker who would like you to give her money via a Kickstarter campaign so she can make a balanced film about sexism in and around the games industry. She doesn't actually have any experience of it herself, but as an "outsider" she believes that she's the right person to highlight such ugliness to other people who don't have a clue about the industry and games either.

While *GTFO: Don't Film the Trolls* will cover the problems women face when working in world of game development, it's Sun-Higginson's focus on online gaming that's made our head tilt. You see, she has admitted www.gamesindustry.biz that she only became aware that women get abused while gaming online when one of her friends told her so.

She has since been to Major League Gaming event Pax East and has spoken to people behind such websites as www.fatuglyorslutty.com and www.notinthekitchenanymore.com. These are websites that collect and publish the abuse and threats that women get online when they play multiplayer games.

But before we get to a point, here's what she said about the videogames industry as a whole: "I didn't think there was still an industry that in 2013 everyone was just fine with being really really sexist." It's an industry in which everyone is fine with being really, really sexist... care to validate that, love?

And now back to the otherwise pleasant world of online gaming, where putting a headset upon your ears takes you into a fragrant aural world of courtesy and basic human decency. Unless you're a woman - in which case you get to suffer the worst. Now, sarcasm aside, we've played online and by just having English accents we've been derided as being "fags" and "homos" and even "chutney ferrets", while the list of sexual atrocities promised towards our mothers grows longer every session.

There's certainly a documentary that can be made about such a phenomenon but, by going out to prove a thesis she already believes in and not going deeper and wider, we're not convinced that we need Shannon as our ambassador to the uninitiated. She seems a bit, well, sexist. ■



ABOVE: Here's Shannon riding into battle in an image that actually comes from the film *Troll Hunter*.

BELOW: Just when you start to think the industry is getting better, this actually goes on sale.



DON'T BELIEVE THE HEIGHT



Here's how much you've been asking about certain games as demonstrated in a line-up of certain game characters. You're still interested in *Tomb Raider* eh? That's interesting...

MAX ANARCHY

TWO DEVS ENTER, ONE DEV LEAVES

Australia's Kennedy Miller Mitchell is a TV and games production house. It's more often known as KMM and it's produced the likes of the Babe and Happy Feet movies, as well as all three Mad Max flicks that were much enjoyed by fans of raw meat and the smell of petrol.

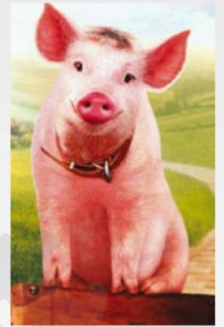
Well not only is there a brand new Mad Max film heading to the screens next year in the form of *Fury Road*, but Warner Bros has registered the internet domain names www.madmaxgame.com, www.worldgonemadlegendofmax.com as well as www.madmaxthegame.com.

It looks like there's some kind of game coming, then. Actually it has looked like that for a while, since such a project was known about in 2008 when Mad Max writer and director George Miller

hooked up with *God of War II* director Cory Barlog for such a project, whereupon Barlog went to join Just Cause developer Avalanche Studios to get busy. Cut to November 2011 when it appeared that Miller changed his plans as to where the game should be developed, having acquired the troubled *L.A. Noire* developer Team Bondi and the rights to its next game - *Whore of the Orient*.

Well wouldn't you know, many staff members at Team Bondi have now been let go and *Whore of the Orient* has been put on hold. Warner Bros. pulled out of its publishing deal right before last Christmas and a lot of money has been spent on going not very far. Outsourcing *Max* to Avalanche might not have been such a bad bet after all. ■

RIGHT: Putting mascara on a pig is just wrong - but with just a few more dabs they could have made a porky Hitler.



BELOW: Here's an image of Tina Turner and Mel Gibson from back when he only acted like he was mental.



XBOX GOES DICK TRACY

YOUR OWN WRIST IS GOING TO CALL YOU A FAT, LAZY BITCH

The Wall Street Journal reported that Microsoft has been asking its Asian suppliers to get busy and send the corporation some touch-based components small enough to be incorporated into a smart watch. Other rumours abound that such a device would have a 1.5 inch touch screen, while no-one has claimed that it would be able to give its users a Chinese burn should they forget to renew their Xbox Live membership.

That said, www.theverge.com has also reported on the incredibly necessary gadget and claims that both Xbox and Kinect staff have been brought in to create a watch that could be used in conjunction with exercise games, which presumably will require a lot of frantic wrist action. Delightful. ■

KIDS TODAY, EH?

GEARS OF WAR 3 BLAMED FOR GRUESOME THROAT OPENING

According to a report in Britain's own bastion of truth, honesty and proper family (and house) values that is the *Daily Mail*, a 13-year-old boy from Clydebank, Scotland has been the unwitting victim of exposure to violent games. Specifically *Gear of War 3* - apparently the wee radge used a knife to slash the throat of a 14-year-old friend he initially met while playing online. No doubt he was exposed to the deadly radiation of evil that such modes give off and just couldn't stop himself from cutting so deep that staples had to be used to conceal the victim's windpipe.

It was Brian Docherty, chairman of the Scottish Police Federation, who alluded to the connection. "These games are rated 18 and shouldn't be played by children of this young age - but online gaming may be outside their parents' knowledge.

We need to look again at what we can do to stop this." Maybe get new parents?

Glasgow's High Court prosecutor, Andrew Brown QC, made the case clearer: "The reporting officer was of the opinion that the violent games played online by the accused may have been a factor in his conduct."

Well, fine - and the fact that the 13-year-old kid was also a father of an actual real child and clearly hasn't seen enough of the Naughty Step probably has nowt to do with it.

A caption in the paper below a screenshot of the game reads, "The 18-rated game, which contains 'strong bloody violence', rewards players for devising ways of murdering their opponents." Well you can't say fairer than that. Now, about that game about shagging... ■

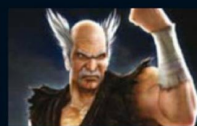


ABOVE: Because Glasgow was well known for its lack of violent crime before this sort of thing started happening.

UK XBOX
360 CHARTS

- 1 Dead Island Riptide
- 2 Injustice: Gods Among Us
- 3 Tomb Raider
- 4 COD: Black Ops II
- 5 Bioshock Infinite
- 6 FIFA 13
- 7 Defiance
- 8 Star Trek
- 9 Far Cry 3
- 10 Gears of War: Judgment

Despite being much more of much the same, but with a few fresh bugs and a greater emphasis on defence, *Riptide* nails the number one slot. We dig it, but then we weren't expecting a full sequel. Though we were expecting better things of *Star Trek*, which is so crap that it wasn't worth wasting a page to write "4" on.

HELLO
HEIHACHI

Heard of *Tekken Revolution*? Well you have now. The game, which we assume will be about an Iron Fist Tournament (and that's not a euphemism), has been given an age rating in Australia. The rating claims the game will be original and multi-platform, so that might mean more 360 *Tekken* – or perhaps not. It will no doubt be revolutionary, mind, and about fighting.



BURNED OUT

Burnout and *Need For Speed Most Wanted* developer Criterion has a chief. His name is Alex Ward and he's not only tired of making car-based games, he's also tweeted about it. "After over a decade of making racing games it's time to make something new. It is early days thus I have nothing to 'announce' or talk about." Good for you, chief.

TIME OUT

ALIENS CO-DEVELOPER CLOSES ITS DOORS

TimeGate Studios – the developer of the *Section 8* games and, infamously, either partly or largely responsible for *Aliens: Colonial Marines* – filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on 01 May.

Publisher (and creditor) SouthPeak Interactive, dubious about the filing, sought to convert it to a Chapter 7 liquidation. Apparently SouthPeak won the arbitration, as at press time www.kotaku.com was reporting that the studio has laid off its staff and has ceased to exist.

Basically the studio owes a lot of money. Money to Epic Games, the creator of the Unreal Engine. Money to Agora Games, which provides online gaming services. Money to transmedia production company DJ2 entertainment. And \$20,539.20 to Birthplace Management Group.

But the biggest (albeit unquantified) debt is to SouthPeak Interactive, which published the original *Section 8* title. Interestingly TimeGate actually sued SouthPeak in 2009, because the developer claimed it had royalties withheld and that the publisher hadn't localised the game.

SouthPeak counter-sued, claiming that TimeGate hadn't invested nearly enough money into the online shooter along with other claims that remain so far unmentioned. The court agreed, to the tune of \$7.35 million in damages and the loss of *Section 8* as an intellectual property. Ouch.

And to think things were looking okay... and then *Aliens* happened. Then TimeGate revealed its upcoming shooter, *Minimalist* in April. Obviously we wouldn't recommend getting your hopes up on ever seeing it now. ■



ABOVE: Here's what *Minimalist* looks/looked like. It seemed very slick in action.



ABOVE: And now let's take a peep at *Section 8*. It was released some four years ago and is still causing all sorts of upset.

LIARS LITIGATED

SEGA AND GEARBOX DEFEND 'WORK IN PROGRESS' FOOTAGE

"Today, we're going to show you a bit of the game... you're going to see what the game actually looks like. Not just screenshots but the actual gameplay," declared Gearbox Software's president, Randy Pitchford, when he revealed *Aliens: Colonial Marines* to an eager audience at E3, 2011. Obviously, things didn't end up going quite to plan.

"Each of the 'actual gameplay' demonstrations purported to show customers exactly what they would be buying: a cutting edge videogame with very specific features and qualities," countered lead plaintiff Damion Perrine's legal complaint. He's attempting to sue Gearbox and Sega on behalf of everybody in the United States who bought the game prior to its 12 February 2013 release

date. "Unfortunately for their fans, (the) defendants never told anyone – consumers, industry critics, reviewers or reporters – that their 'actual gameplay' demonstration advertising campaign bore little resemblance to the retail product that would eventually be sold to a large community of unwitting purchasers."

Sega Europe has already marked the *Colonial Marines* online trailers as not being from in-game footage, thanks to a complaint made to the Advertising Standards Agency. Now it's the Americans' time to do things on a bigger scale.

Speaking to www.kotaku.com, Gearbox has since offered its take on the legal proceedings: "Attempting to wring a class action lawsuit out of a demonstration is beyond meritless.



ABOVE: These legal cases are comin' outta the god-damned walls!

We continue to support the game, and will defend the rights of entertainers to share their works-in-progress without fear of frivolous litigation."

And here's Sega, talking to the folks at www.eurogamer.net: "Sega cannot comment on specifics of ongoing litigation, but we are confident that the lawsuit is without merit and we will defend it vigorously." Mmm, now that's all sounding rather spicy... ■

IN HOUSE

The inside scoop on life at 360 Gamer

RECENTLY PLAYED

WHAT IS THAT FIERY BALL IN THE SKY? LOOKS DANGEROUS... WE'D BETTER STAY IN AND PLAY

Here at **360 Gamer** we work hard and we play hard – often while wearing red braces and quoting lines from Oliver Stone's *Wall Street*. Health packs are for wimps...

Ian has 1,000-pointed *Bioshock Infinite* and is now all about *Dead Island: Riptide*. "It's buggy as hell," he claims. Yet, "so far, equipping a staff with a Tesla coil, using the chainsaw and grabbing my first Katana sword and turning that into a flame-licked limb-lopper has made me squeal like a pig on fire."

James has been having a bit of "an iPad kinda time lately". Highlights have included the puzzlicious *The Room* as well as *Gemini Rue*. "It's basically the *Blade Runner* point-and-click adventure game that never was – except for the one that actually was, but this is still fuppin' ace. And works great on the iPad." Sold.

Will has again been watching his wife play *Ni no Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch* on his PS3. He's also enjoyed the meatheaded charms of *Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon* and *Star Command* on his iPad. "Oh dear," he muttered, "it's very much the better Star Trek game."



STREET TEAM

BRAVING THE ELEMENTS BECAUSE GAMES

DON'T JUST TURN UP ON OUR DOORSTEP

Although neither James nor Will went anywhere this issue and remained in stasis, as it were, Ian managed to score some excellent adventures.

First he popped over to EA's Guildford office to see *FIFA 14* – and very excited about it he was n'all. What he actually saw, however, was a PowerPoint presentation and videos that showed off some new tech. People have killed themselves for less, but the fact that he came back glistening in excitement speaks volumes.

Having seen fresh balls in play, he then sauntered to the

Rockstar office on London's King's Road where he got to witness the vast landscape of Blaine County from a few thousand feet in the air. Now he knows what he'll be doing in September: roaming around *Grand Theft Auto V* looking at stuff. Then and only then does he intend to start actually playing the game.

And of course there was videogaming's new guru, Matt Edwards, who visited the Ice Tank in London. It's a venue, by the way, and one chosen because such a chilled environment was perfectly suited to *Lost Planet 3*.



ABOVE: You think this looks like the bomb? You should have seen the PowerPoint presentations – epic wins all round.

BELOW: Look carefully and you'll see Ian hanging out of the cockpit, his tongue flapping like a spaniel's.



FROM THE PENTHOUSE...

DOUBLE DRAGON

Okay, we'll admit it – we're still chuffed with *Blood Dragon* and doubly so now that it's out.

BAT SIGNS

Arkham Origins is going for a film noir look of hard shadows and limited midtones – yes!

PERFECT TIMING

May Bank Holiday manages to be both sunny and land right on deadline week.

GORY STRUMPET

Dead Island Riptide's Zombie Bait Edition goes on sale for £90 despite being ugly and, well, sexist.

HALF TIDE

Dead Island Riptide again – entering the charts at number one despite selling half the units that the original managed.

UNSOLD SNAKE

There'll be no *Metal Gear Solid: Legacy Collection* coming your way because *MGS4* itself would take up seven discs.

GAME SLUMP

Gears Of War: Judgment only manages 425,00 first-month sales in the US when *Gears 3* did over two million. Somewhere, Cliffy B cackles maniacally.

... TO THE SHITHOUSE



MY LIFE

BEFORE THE TRUTH EVEN PUTS ITS BOOTS ON

Hey, Microsoft, why don't you go have sex with yourself? I'm not having you tell me that that I need to have my Xbox 'always on' and I don't give a split fig about your media plans to take over my television. I'm a gamer, remember them? I want games, not entertainment content, and I greatly enjoy playing second-hand titles, thankyouverymuch. I don't want your family oriented bullshit. I don't want your Kinect 2.0. It's PlayStation for me this round, you corporate shyster, so here, have a spit-dribbled rattle in the face... waaaaaah!

Well that was all very cathartic, but I must admit that it also shows a 180-degree difference to my view of what I'm still calling the Durango. Well, with print deadlines, the announcement on 21 May is a way off as I write this, even if it's yesterday or beyond for you, so as of the now I'm just happily bathing in the rather heavy swell of discontent rising from the 360's usual fanbase that's plenty pissed off about the NextBox, despite being reasonably ignorant of key facts.

Perhaps the next console will actually require a constant internet connection

to function in any way. That's possible (and by now you could know) but, as far as I can tell, this rumour came from the fact that a games console that wants to also provide movies and TV will have to be 'always on' to do so – just like the 360 does now. Playing an offline game? Then I really do doubt that you'll be scuppered if the connection snaps, but such doubts really haven't received a decent airing.

Such confusion is Microsoft's fault, of course, but it's also the fault of us game information repeaters and inventors. Especially those websites that will cover a story, for example, about a multiplayer online game for the next system that is also required to be 'always on' – as if there is any other possible way to play an exclusively online game.

"Look! You need a constant internet connection for this game, just like the console!" they suggest in unsubtle terms. I'll mention no names, but will point out that by putting 'always on' in the heading of an internet article, the guy who came in to advise on search engine optimisation will know they've done a good job. Hits make prizes,

TOP RIGHT: Kinect 2.0 will actually follow you around town to make sure you're not being unfaithful with other media content suppliers.

RIGHT: You can bet that if there is a Durango 2 its marketing team will stop their cats getting out of any bags.

BELOW: Here's a screenshot from Respawn's Durango mech game – it will require your console to be always on, so "they" say.



Microsoft XBOX Durango Development Kit

Item condition: Used
Time left: 6d 19h (Aug 16, 2012 23:44:55 PDT)
Current bid: US \$420.00 [21 bids]
Place bid
Enter US \$425.00 or more
Add to watch list
Shipping: Read item description or contact seller for details. | See all
See details about international shipping here. |
Item location: Wilmington, Delaware, United States
Ships to: Worldwide
Delivery: Varies
Payments: PayPal | See details

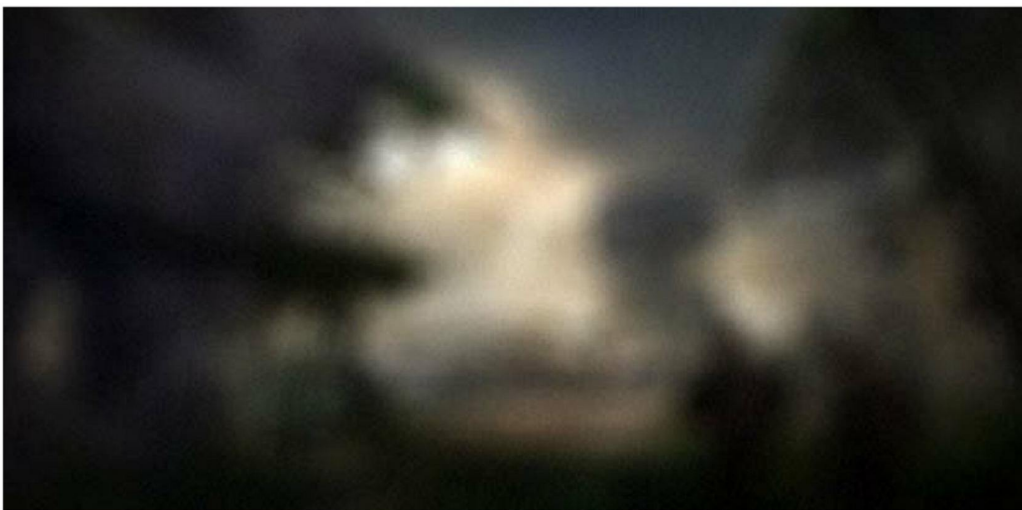
even if those hits come from being totally disingenuous.

And you know what – I actually use Netflix more than I do standard TV channels and have long since lost any worries about using an Xbox to watch programmes. I still use it for games, obviously, but it's already a key component of my couch-based passive pleasure. Better integration? Fine, why not – as long as the front end doesn't become as slow as my current Metro is now, I'm in for a bit of that.

Second-hand games, though – now that would be commercial suicide, which is why I doubt the rumour ever had much merit, but was no doubt at least mooted in meetings before being shot down by the reality of how people like to lend and borrow games, not just buy them cheap. There's no money in my contentment, of course – I should really be preaching the controversy. ■



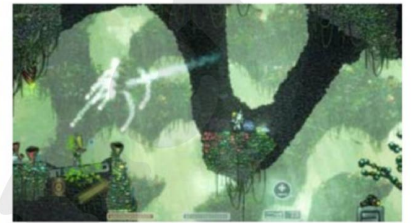
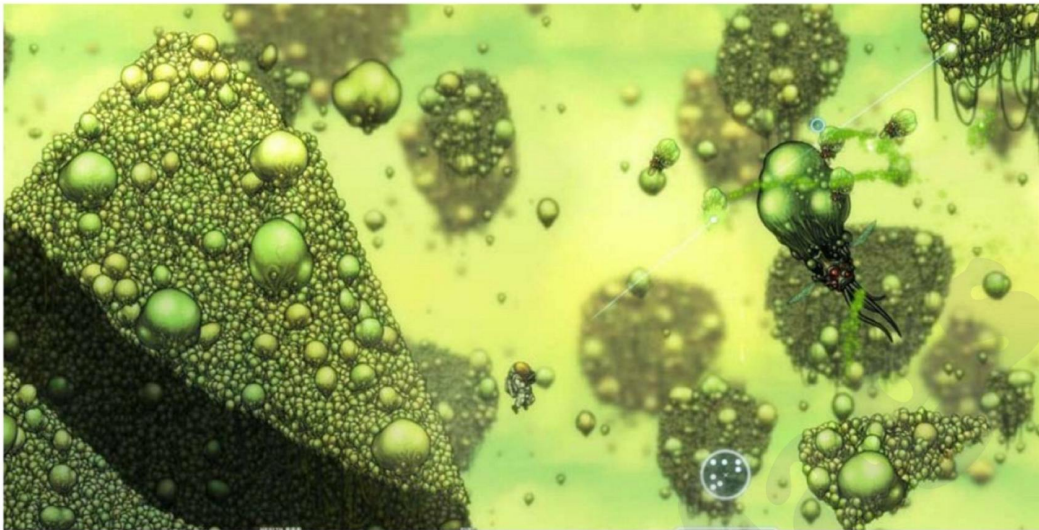
ABOVE: Joining the conversation? About time, since so far it's been more of an argument.



ARCADIA

Because shiny discs
have had their day

DROWNING IN OLD-SCHOOL COOL



CAPSIZED

Originally listed as a Live Arcade game back in 2010, but available on the PC since 2011 and iPad earlier this year, information pertaining to the Xbox release of this hand-drawn platform sci-fi shooting adventure had dried up like an umbilical cord discarded on a sun-baked pavement. But now it's definitely coming out in 2013. Yay! Why the delay? Presumably because something very horrible happened that only a partnership between the small but perfectly formed publisher IndiePub Entertainment and the big and often quite mighty Namco Bandai could resolve.

Well, whatever – now it's finally on its way. Immediately endearing to play (though pretty sloshy on the iPad), *Capsized* clearly knows its roots, too, and thanks to it actually having been out for a while on other formats we've even given it a quick go. Older gamers might consider it something in the vein of Ultimate Play The Game's 1984 hit, *Underwurlde*, with some *Jetpack* thrown in there for good measure – but with an atmospheric soundtrack that's like Brian Eno has got into your

mother's medicine cabinet again and beautiful sprite work that's really nothing like an old game from the Eighties at all.

Indeed, with a grapple gun that can be used to swing on or solve physics-based puzzles, dual-fire weaponry and a highly detailed general visual lushness, *Capsized* is very much a potential retro-modern Live Arcade classic that will now be coming to the console with a few new additions and the potential of extra downloadable content. Life is good.

It's about you crash landing on an alien planet and trying to work out your escape plan, by the way. That's probably important and would certainly go some way to explaining the *Jetpack* reference that, now we're thinking about it, only works when you consider that both games are about escaping from planets and both feature jetpacks of some description. It also handles as if you're underwater, even though the effect is really due to greater gravity and a much thicker atmosphere. Your character certainly looks like they're deep in some sea

ABOVE: The Great Cthulhu's best man is mocked by analogue-aimed gunfire.

TOP RIGHT: Dropping multiple missiles on an alien git while on the way to rescue a buddy – that's living alright.

BELOW: It's a game about breaking down in somebody else's manor and then killing all the locals.

or ocean, even though they are not, which just goes to show how clever its name really is.

Developed by *Nexuiz* developer Alientrap, an early version of *Capsized* was actually submitted by its coder Lee Vermeulen and graphics artist Jesse McGibney as their final undergraduate project back when they were studying to be evidently very talented in their native Canada. If Metacritic scores mean anything to you then it might be useful for the game's average of a highly respectable 80% to be mentioned. That way at least you know we're not just hyping the game up because it reminds us of the good old days. Oh, another grey hair – joy. ■



22 MAY

CALL OF JUAREZ GUNSLINGER

Should the constant need to narrate everything eventually tone down then it could well be that this Wild West combo-scoring, no-nonsense (well, *some* nonsense) first-person blaster really does deserve to hit Live on the same day that this issue of the magazine is out. Downloadable trial versions really are your friends.



23 MAY

SOCIAL GAMING 2013, LONDON

This conference/summit thing covers social gaming as well as 'social gambling' and will deal with issues such as virtual currencies, privacy, marketing and advertising. By 2015 the social gaming industry could be worth \$7 billion, which is fine, but does it really have to infect all the games that we play happy and alone?



31 MAY

GRID 2

Gary Numan was wrong - EVERYTHING feels right in cars, especially if Codemasters has pulled off the new 'TrueFeel' handling system that's meant to perfectly bridge realism and accessibility. Expect some 40 years of vehicles and to be disappointed if you go looking for a first-person view. Only 5% of players used it in the last game, apparently. Bah!



03 JUNE

WRECK-IT RALPH

Directed by *The Simpsons* and *Futurama* guy Rich Moore and designed to do for videogames what *Toy Story* did for McDonalds Happy Meals... er... toys. If you appreciate the retro and have a sense of humour then you'll probably already know that the DVD and Blu-ray is out today. It's no Pixar-beater but it's still darn good fun.



07 JUNE

REMEMBER ME

If French film director Luc Besson was put in charge of a sci-fi game drawn by a student of comic book artist Moebius, and wasn't fussed about providing fun, hey presto. The game has room for improvement (see page 114), but there is a slim chance that some enhancements will have been made. And hey, it's really pretty. Review next ish.



11-13 JUNE

E3, LOS ANGELES

What with Microsoft taking over 21 May with its next generation announcement, all smart money is on this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo being very NextBox and PlayStation 4-flavoured. Let's just hope that it also focuses on a load of games, eh? And for there to be fresh IPs - not just stale ones suffixed with higher numbers or new words after a colon.



14 JUNE

MAN OF STEEL

Another superhero gets the gritty treatment as this movie beams onto the silver screens and we get to enjoy a moodier origin story of the son of Jor-El. But why was young Clark Kent seen playing about with a sheet for a cape in the trailer? That only makes sense if he's seen 1930s circus performers or is pretending to be Superman - logic, kneel before Zod!



14 JUNE

DARK

Though not quite *Alpha Protocol* with vampires, there's still a fair bit to get your teeth into (sorry) in this cel-shaded action-RPG from Kalypso Media. Be stealthy, be sneaky, improve your powers and bamf about like Nightcrawler and, well, *Dishonored*. It's most certainly not a cover-based shooter and is out on this very day - will it burn in the sunlight?



17-19 JUNE

GAMES FOR CHANGE, NEW YORK

This festival is the largest gaming event in New York City and has even become known to some fans as 'The Sundance of Games'. That said, the Sundance Film Festival isn't about films that promote social change and that's very much what G4C is all about. Can videogames make the world a better place?



19 JUNE

360 GAMER #129

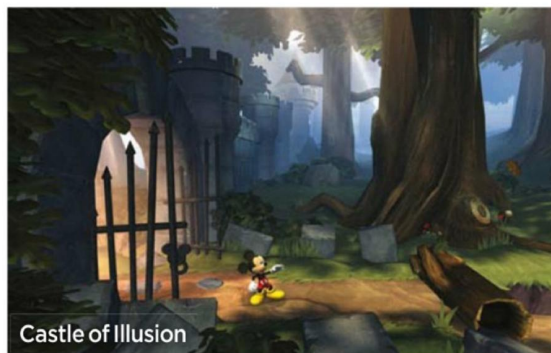
Forget the 108th anniversary of the world's first nickelodeon coin-operated movie machine and go get thee a copy of the latest issue of **360 Gamer**, either in the classic paper-and-ink format or via digital wizardry. Obviously we haven't started working on it at the time of this sentence's creation, but trust us when we reliably inform you that it'll be aces.



GAMESRADAR

ShopTo.net
ShopLate | PlayTomorrow

HOT PICKS



Castle of Illusion



Killer is Dead



Splinter Cell Blacklist

Sam Fisher's popularity has diminished because his games were too cerebral and required too much planning, so reckons Ubisoft Toronto. *Blacklist* will cater for a fuller spectrum of player types, then. But does that mean it's going to do a *Hitman Absolution*? That wouldn't be such a bad thing - we just own that game already.

23 AUGUST • £38.86

Batman: Arkham Origins

It's the early days of the World's Greatest Detective (and ninja) and the brilliance of previous Arkhams makes us believe that *Origins* will be just as minty fine. Current rumours suggest an inclusion of multiplayer into the usual mix. As long as there's a solid focus on the main campaign, we're cool with that.

25 OCTOBER • £39.85

Assassin's Creed IV Black Flag

Despite protests from animal rights groups that don't get the concept of obvious historical context, it's looking like you'll be able to hunt whales in this open-world pirate adventure... though it still won't contain Henry Rollins. Boo! But avast ye blubber lovers, ye could well be in for a fine and swarthy time.

01 NOVEMBER • £44.86

Dynasty Warriors 8

Online and offline co-op through the single-player campaign, new mechanics, improved graphics, different weapons and... stuff. Some of you will already know if you want more epic battles and meta strategy from this ancient series, while a great deal more will still be shaking your heads while tutting like a maiden aunt.

12 JULY • £34.85

PRICES ARE CORRECT AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

MAY

Fuse	EA
GRID 2	Codemasters
Painkiller: Hell & Damnation	Nordic Games
Persona 4 Arena	PQube

JUNE

Ashes Cricket 2013	505 Games
Dark	Kalypso Media
Lost Planet 3	Capcom
MotoGP 2013	PQube
Remember Me	Capcom

JULY

Deadfall Adventures	Nordic Games
Dynasty Warriors 8	Tecmo Koei
The Smurfs 2	Ubisoft
Tour de France 2013	Koch

AUGUST

Disney Infinity	Disney
Rambo: The Video Game	Reef Entertainment
Splinter Cell Blacklist	Ubisoft

SEPTEMBER

Farming Simulator 2013	Focus Home Interactive
Grand Theft Auto V	Rockstar
Rayman Legends	Ubisoft

OCTOBER

Batman: Arkham Origins	Warner Bros.
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NOVEMBER

Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	Ubisoft
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LEGO Marvel Super Heroes	WB Games
Watch Dogs	Ubisoft

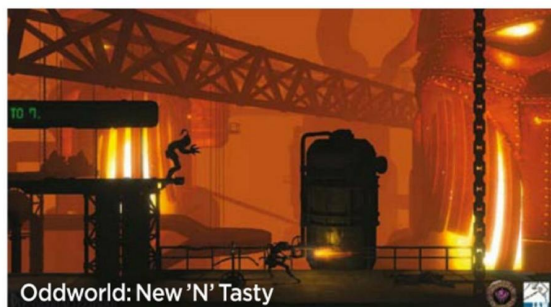
TBC 2013

Air Conflicts: Vietnam	PQube
A.R.E.S.: Extinction Agenda EX	Aksys Games
Armored Core: Verdict Day	Namco Bandai
Ascend: New Gods	Microsoft
BandFuse: Rock Legends	Mastiff Games
Bound by Flame	Focus Home Interactive
Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons	505 Games
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2	Konami
Castle of Illusion	Sega
Combat Wings WWII	City Interactive
Crash Time 5: Undercover	PQube
Crimson Dragon	Microsoft
Dark Souls II	Namco Bandai
Deadpool	Activision
Destiny	Activision
DiRT 4	Codemasters
Dragon Age III: Inquisition	EA
DuckTales Remastered	Capcom
Earth Defence Force 2025	D3 Publisher
Enemy Front	City Interactive
FIFA 14	EA
Homefront 2	Crytek
Killer is Dead	Kadokawa Games
Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII	Square Enix
LocoCycle	Microsoft
Magrunner: Dark Pulse	Focus Home Interactive
Mars: War Logs	Focus Home Interactive
Metal Gear Solid: Ground Zeroes	Konami
Obscure	Focus Home Interactive
Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee - New 'n' Tasty	Just Add Water
Payday 2	505 Games

PES 2014	Konami
Prey 2	Bethesda
Rainbow 6 Patriots	Ubisoft
Ryse	Microsoft
Sacred 3	Deep Silver
Sanctum 2	Reverb Publishing
Secret Ponchos	Switchblade Monkeys
Sherlock Holmes: Crimes & Punishments	Focus Home Interactive
South Park: The Stick of Truth	Ubisoft
Spartacus Legends	Ubisoft
State of Decay	Microsoft
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows	Activision
Tekken X Street Fighter	Namco Bandai
The Croods	Namco Bandai
The Dark Eye: Demonicon	Kalypso Media
The Incredible Adventures of Van Helsing	TBC
The Raven	Nordic Games
The Walking Dead: Season Two	Telltale Games
Thunder Wolves	bitComposer
Wolfenstein: The New Order	Bethesda
World Series of Poker: Full House Pro	Microsoft
WWE 2K14	2K Games
Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z	Tecmo Koei
Zeno Clash II	Atlus

TBC 2014

Murdered: Soul Suspect	Square Enix
Sniper Elite 3	505 Games
The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt	TBC
Thief	Square Enix
The Evil Within	Bethesda
The Dark Triad: Dragon's Death	Autoloot Games



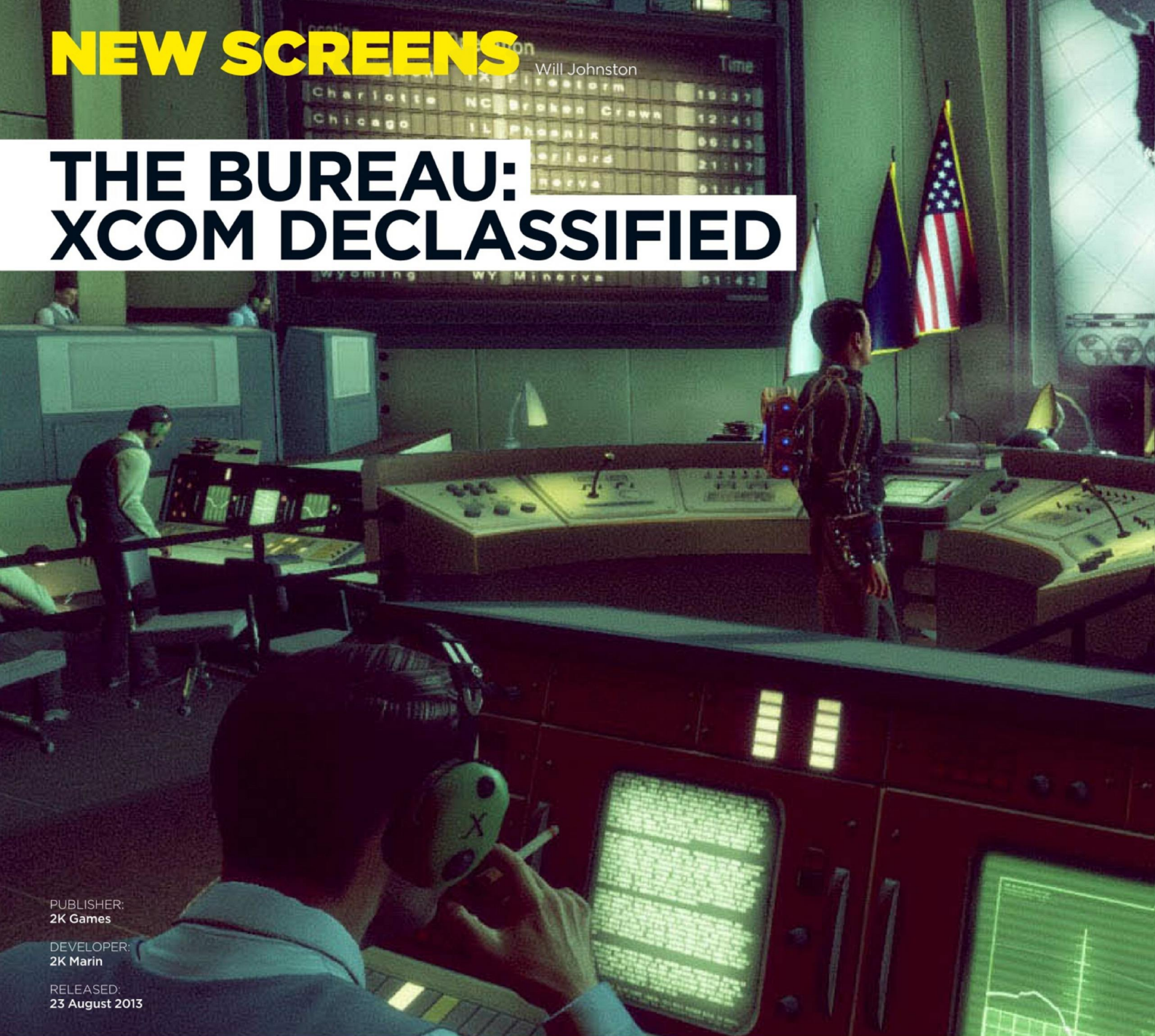
Oddworld: New 'N' Tasty



Rambo: The Video Game

WorldMags.net

THE BUREAU: XCOM DECLASSIFIED



PUBLISHER:
2K Games

DEVELOPER:
2K Marin

RELEASED:
23 August 2013



GET CARTER!

"We're thrilled about 2K Marin's refined vision for *The Bureau: XCOM Declassified*. The game has evolved through a creative and iterative development process, and the result is a narrative-driven experience that is smart, engaging and challenges players to think tactically." So said 2K Games' president Christoph Hartmann last month. Oh it's evolved, alright, after being placed into an environment so caustic to its survival that it *had* to in order to survive. But enough of our triumphant and ironic use of another man's words – here are some of our own.

The Bureau is all about the origins of XCOM, so we can only imagine that if it's about space aliens then some men in black with Neuralyzers will probably turn up near its denouement to wipe the memory of every Bureau operative, including lead hard man William Carter. Wasn't *Enemy Unknown* about first contact with extra terrestrials? Well, one of the *The Bureau's* tasks is to cover up all evidence of an "outside" threat to help stop the population of the planet losing its shit. They had enough to worry about, what with the Cuban Missile Crisis and the possibility of mutually assured destruction and all.



“The Nineties generation of gamers all love XCOM and we own the IP, so we thought, ‘Okay, what do we do with it?’ Every studio we had wanted to do it and each one had its own spin on it. But the problem was that turn-based strategy games were no longer the hottest thing on planet Earth. But this is not just a commercial thing – strategy games are just not contemporary.” -- 2K Games president, Christoph Hartmann, July 2011

Just swill that quote around your mouth a little. Mmm, we’re getting burned oak, plums, regret and heavy hints of hubris – delicious. It originates from half a year before *Enemy Unknown* was announced and two years before it became such a success that DLC is still being made, and pertains to an XCOM first-person shooter that was quite obviously something that nobody wanted – especially all the actual XCOM fans.

Well, it’s back in the form of *The Bureau* and thankfully Christoph has done the right thing and put those original plans on hold, ordering a more tactical action game that should complement and expand upon one of our favourite titles of 2012. We’re actually quite excited.

Set in 1962 at the height of the Cold War, the game really can’t hurt the XCOM franchise – that’s safe. What *The Bureau* might even do is expand it in a winning way and, since it’s now plain that gamers don’t just want shooters and that analysts don’t know diddly, it could even be a thinker.



MAD MEN

No longer a first-person shooter with some tactical touches, *The Bureau* is now a *third-person* shooter with them. Still, with no user interface visible on any of these screens and only the knowledge that Carter will lead a squad of rather dapperly dressed agents who can retrieve and adapt what could be alien technology (though the word ‘alien’ isn’t used in current press material), there’s everything to play for and quite a few months for deeper details to emerge.

Expect to slow down if not pause the action as you give out orders, to spend time researching new guns and gadgets, and for 2K Marin to still be stinging from the severe amount of bitchslaps it received the last time it tried to foist a non-turn-based tactical XCOM upon us.

The final game might actually work and we really do hope that it does – we’re not wishing failure upon the project at all, though it sure would be positively hilarious if *The Bureau* doesn’t end up doing anything like *Enemy Unknown*’s numbers and it turns out that not only do games *not* have to be shooters to be successful, but being a shooter doesn’t mean you’ll be widely accepted at all. We’re not bitter, honest.



Turns out minotaurs really hate being pelted with rotten cabbages and eggs.

HELLRAID

YO, SHE-BITCH – LET’S GO!

What the... well, to be fair this is all going to be relatively straightforward and easy to explain. You are surely aware of *Dead Island* and know of its much loved and occasionally derided single-player and co-op slashing wet work. Now add some magical weaponry to the blades and spears, take away the guns and implement a Game Master system that does a right Left 4 Dead and spawns different enemies at different locations each time you play, randomises loot placement and goes a bit further by generating online challenges and we’re done... although, not quite.

You see, in a manner that brings back some fond memories of Raven Software’s 1996 FPS *Heretic*, and the way it modified *Doom* by adding such newfangled concepts as the ability to look up and down in a grim fantasy setting, *Hellraid* also wants to get medieval on your bottom and add a few tricks of its own. Where once there were zombies on contemporary tropical islands attempting to eat the brains of the world’s worst actors, now there will be skeletal, demonic, armour-clad monstrosities rampaging around gothic surroundings set in those days of yore, in the underworld. Their acting quality is unknown, but their rotting intestines will be spilled.

Think of it all as a raid on hell, if you like, since that seems to be exactly what Techland is suggesting with the game’s name. *Hellraid* – it’s clever and direct. You might also consider that *Doom*’s successor, *Quake*, was originally going to be set in such a world and be based more on swords than on nailguns, before swordplay was found to be just too damned difficult to implement with a mouse and keyboard.

We’ve been around these sorts of parts before, then, and it worked out just swell – after a fashion. Soon you’ll be able to cut up an army of darkness using analogue precision and cast Magic Missiles to do +10 gore damage over ten seconds, or something to that effect.

These are the first screenshots to be released. So far the developer is keen to explain that, while the game will be pretty damned elegant and nasty for four players who can battle for leaderboard dominance, it’s also going to work well for those of you who don’t like being so social or care about scores. Did we mention it was originally intended to be a mode in *Dead Island*? Well now you know. See, it’s not that hard to explain.

But wasn’t a lot of *Dead Island*’s charm based on the fact that it was about some modern types battling

PUBLISHER:
TBA

DEVELOPER:
Techland

RELEASED:
TBC 2013

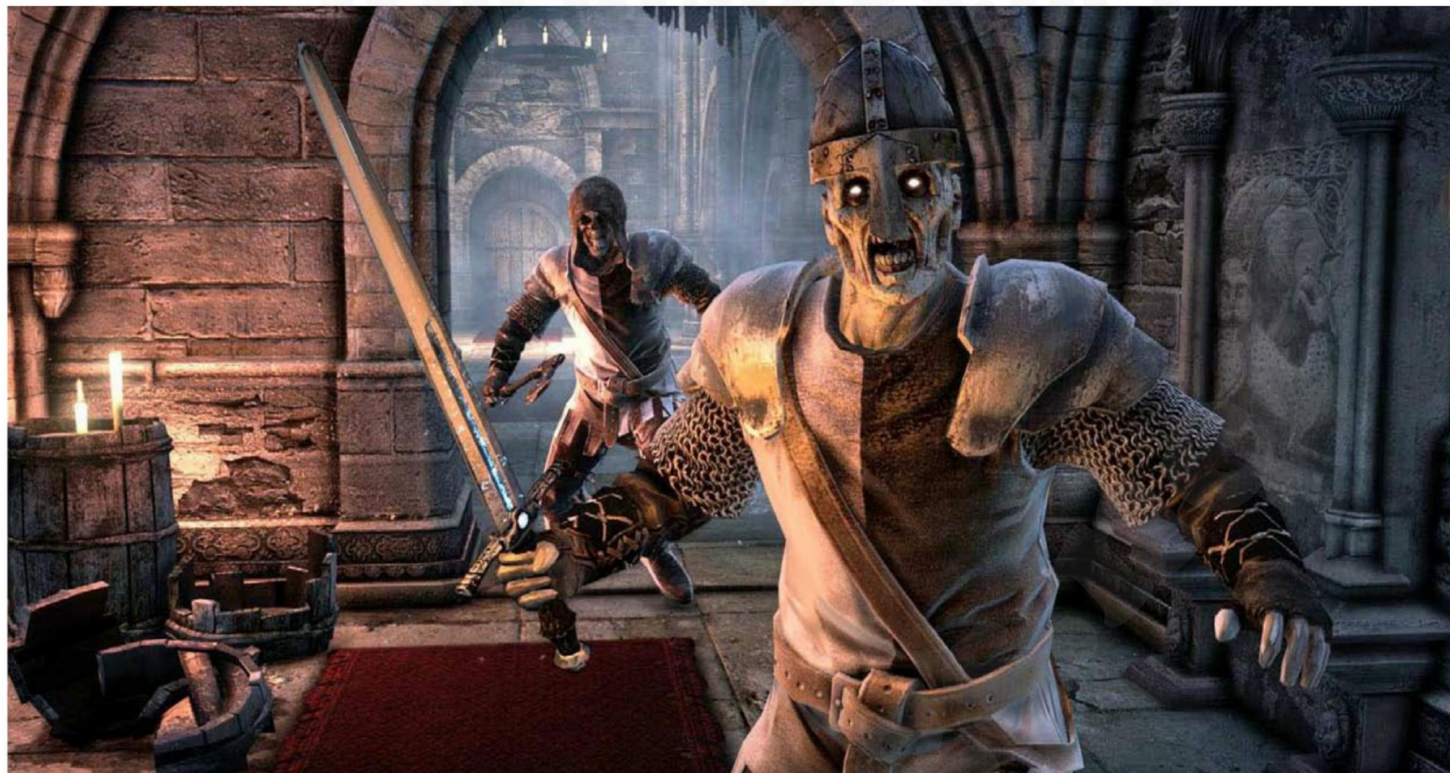


RIGHT: So if you cut this dude’s arm off and he can’t use that head to see, he’s blinded proper?

VOODOO PEOPLE



TECHLAND: Originally a software distributor, this Polish dev’s first actual game was *Crime Cities* released in 2000. *Call of Juarez* from 2006, however, brought it to much wider notice.



modern zombies? Certainly there's no shortage of such games, so a twist on the formula would be welcome. But will the same mass audience still have its interest piqued by something that looks like an image on an Eighties heavy metal t-shirt that's come to life, rather than *The Walking Dead* on holiday? Arguably that's a different sell – not an altogether different one, of course, just different enough to make us wonder if exactly the same fanbase will return.

Clearly Techland is happy with what it's doing and, as *Riptide* underlines (see page 88), the dev doesn't mind shipping out an action-RPG that could have done with quite a few bugs being crushed before being released for public consumption. Bugs that you'd think would be easy to identify, since the not-quite sequel uses a lot of pre-existing systems and mechanics that first came to light in 2011.

We're well used to the concept of patches by now. It's just a bit sad that being introduced to a new game style automatically inspires a wish that the developer would spend as much time making it all *work* as it has on designing fresh and hellish landscapes with a *Dark Souls* vibe. There's no set release date as yet, so you know what? Techland, you just take your time with this one – we'll be waiting. ■

ABOVE: If these ghouls don't speak in Welsh accents then Techland will have missed a trick.

A QUESTION OF CLASS

In a massive nod to *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Hellraid* will offer you and your party four different classes of character to choose from – and each one is pretty darned classical. Like wielding massive axes and gigantic swords? Then the Warrior is for you. If you prefer to freeze, burn or electrocute enemies then you'll want to pick up the Mage's staff. The Paladin is all about defensive powers that heal and protect, while the Rogue brings along a mighty crossbow.

Expect each character to have their own skill tree, to be able to modify their weaponry (or so we hope) and to be able to earn extra points for killing in the name of cooperation. And with no images, hey – here's an enemy Necromancer.



RIGHT: Grim, but we still reckon that *Dark Souls II* will kill you more often.



SPLINTER CELL BLACKLIST

IF YOUR NAME'S NOT DOWN, YOU'RE NOT COMING IN

Sam Fisher is a man of multiple talents. He can be stealthy and ghost-like, he can be full-on aggressive and engage in direct battles against multiple enemies, he's even developed a talent for 'killing in motion' and can take out targets on the move, swiftly and efficiently. And, up until midway through last year, he could insert his knife into a man's clavicle and twist it round as the player rotated an analogue stick while grinning maniacally at their TV. Come on, everybody, let's hear it for interactive torture scenes!

Perhaps it's very much a good thing that Ubisoft Toronto has decided that aforesaid ugliness is just a touch too much, so you won't get asked to be quite such a nasty son of a bitch when *Blacklist* hits the streets in August. The

PUBLISHER:
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER:
Ubisoft Toronto

RELEASED:
23 August 2013

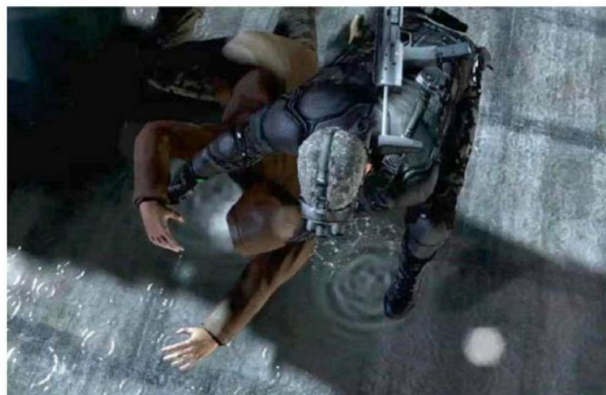
RIGHT: Crossbows – for when silenced pistols just aren't quiet enough.

BELOW: Sam is so hard that he can even use a pavement as a reasonably effective weapon. Bad man!



Sam's goggles are iconic, no doubt. They're his equivalent of Mario's moustache. But aren't they just getting a bit silly now?

See how much light they pump out? He'd be better off disguising himself as a Christmas tree, for goodness sake.



SERIOUSLY: Terrorists have an inability to see any light shone through a green filter.

There's plenty of stealth for those who like to be sneaky – just no torture for sick puppies.



knife-twist element has been dropped and the developer since concluded that it would be better off pushing other, less controversial elements, since torture is so 2004 and just isn't cool any more.

Instead, check out how Sam is no longer focused so tightly on stealth and can be far more adaptive than ever before. You'll see images from the latest trailer on these pages that really do want you to realise he's a man of all violent seasons – and if you don't like being sneaky then that's just peachy and you'll be well served. ■



LEFT: You couldn't get a man in his fifties to run like this. It'd be bloomin' impossible.



AGE SHALL NOT WEARY THEM

Sam Fisher was born in 1957, Eric Johnson in 1977 – that's a fair age gap between the actor (who's taken over from Michael Ironside) and the character he plays. It's all due to physical requirements of motion-capture, of course, but does suggest that Fisher is so fictitious that Ubisoft couldn't find an old guy capable of doing what he does.



IT'S CANADIAN BACON



UBISOFT TORONTO: Formed in 2009, and headed up by Assassin's Creed producer Jade Raymond, the developer is also partly responsible for *Rainbow 6 Patriots*, which is now a next-gen release.



STATE OF DECAY

WHO LEFT ALL THAT BLOOD IN THIS SANDBOX?

Zombies, zombies, zombies. You can't swing a dead cat these days for all the bloody zombies – and the disapproving looks of strangers in the street. Funny zombies, scary zombies, garden-trampling zombies... You'd have thought we'd hit saturation point years ago, and in many ways we had, but that was until Undead Labs started to drop tasty nuggets of info about a Live Arcade game it's creating. And it might just be the best zombie killer (well, zombie apocalypse survivor) yet.

State of Decay's thing, of course, is that it's a game about killing the undead in which you don't just take on the role of a single character involved in a single storyline (though you do begin as a guy called Marcus), but you can swap between any of the NPCs that you manage to recruit, having added them to the community roster and won their trust by making them perform missions and doing reciprocal favours.

The overall story is down to how you play, who survives and what remains of them in a reactive, open-world environment – and when that character dies they die forever, so be wary of getting too attached. And should they have collected a load of useful loot, someone else will have to venture out and get it from the corpse.

PUBLISHER:
Microsoft Studios

DEVELOPER:
Undead Labs

RELEASED:
June 2013

RIGHT: You'd have thought that all the gunk in their ears would make zombies deaf, but apparently not – so be quiet.



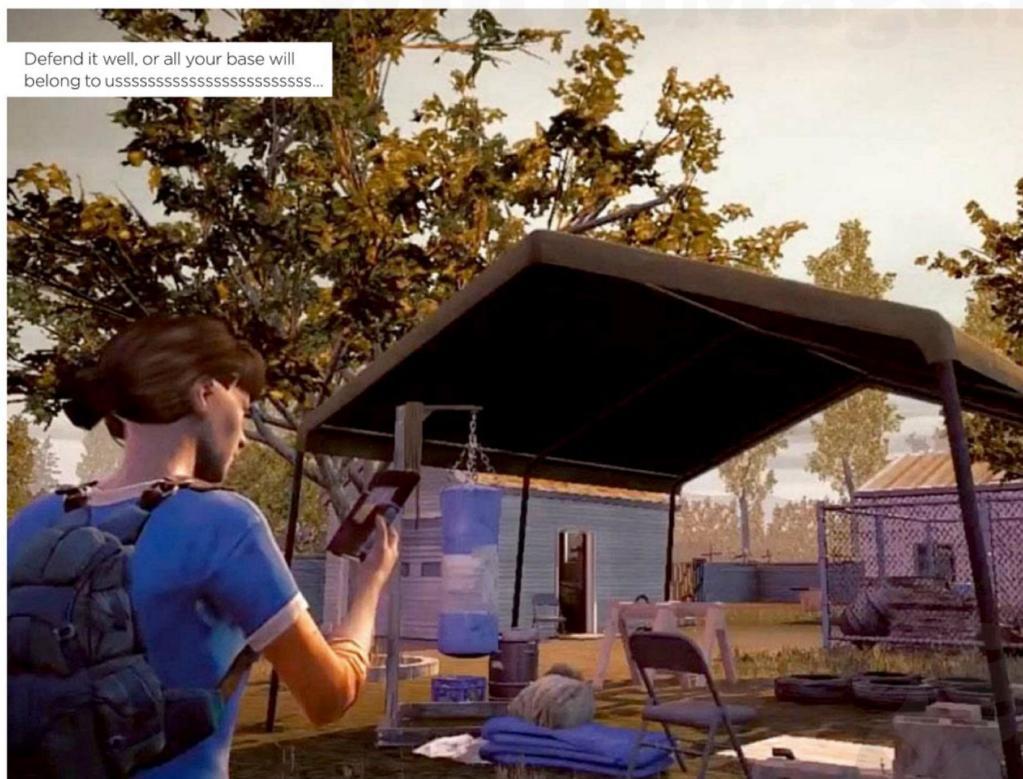
THE GRAVE OUTDOORS

Didn't we see this guy stomping up what looked like Mount Chiliad in that *Grand Theft Auto V* trailer? If so then it certainly seems a great deal like he's wandered off by mistake and has found himself in a whole new world of potential hurt – so far, indeed, that he's wound up in a different game entirely.

While *State of Decay* features vehicles of many descriptions, you can expect to be doing a lot of legwork yourself – especially when your car gets totally ruined after one too many knocks. Resources necessary to your survival will be scarce and you won't be able to do a *Dead Island* and farm the same areas over and over (and over) again for goodies.

Nope, instead you'll have to venture further away from base as the local supplies dwindle. Eventually you'll move your community somewhere new, where hopefully you'll be able to find the things you so desperately need. Before that it's going to be totally possible to have driven far from home, suffered a massive mechanical failure and have to leg it back without the ability to open your car door into a zombie's face while the vehicle is zooming forward.





Defend it well, or all your base will belong to usssssssssssssssssssss...



It's certainly set to offer a lot of potential for how you attempt to live once society breaks down and is being feasted upon by its own damned relatives, since how you do so and where you venture is up to you. You'll definitely need supplies, though, and so will need to scavenge. And you're going to need what will be an ever-decreasing circle of artificially intelligent friends.

So far the developers really seem to have nailed a suitably oppressive tone since, aside from some pretty awful store names, they're definitely not playing for laughs. It could well be the 'water cooler game' of 2013, or at least within Live's offerings, thanks to its vast array of options – including the ability to create your own bases of operations by selecting which facilities you'll need, then gaining the materials and skilled NPC recruits necessary to build them.

You'll most likely be receiving missions in the form of the usual requests to go fetch stuff, too, but your wider strategy and tactical response will be the responsibility of your own fresh brain. Now *that's* a concept we can get behind and, so far, *State of Decay* is shaping up to be the zombie game we've been screaming for – and for so long our metaphorical voice has gone hoarse. ■



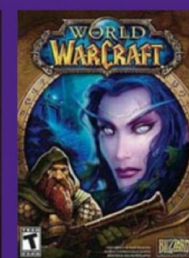
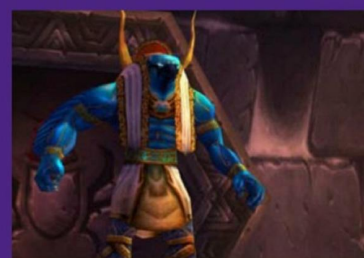
TOP RIGHT: Sure, a shotgun is always a good friend to have, but we'd wager that ammo is scarce and the noise is a risk.

BOTTOM RIGHT: If all else fails, burn them with fire.



LEFT: "When Tallahassee goes Hulk on a zombie, he sets the standard for those 'not to be f**ked with'."

THE VIRGIN CORPSES



UNDEAD LABS: Jeff Strain worked on the likes of *World of Warcraft* at Blizzard before he left in 2009 to found his own Seattle-based and zombie-focused development team.

FIRST LOOK

Ian Collen

PUBLISHER:
EA Sports

DEVELOPER:
EA Canada

RELEASED:
13 September 2013

NHL 14

As a mag with a mainly UK-based readership, we've found the NHL franchise a pretty tough sell. It has been one of EA Sports' most consistent performers over the years, introducing many key features along the way and, in terms of pure quality, often outshines its more illustrious counterparts. However, with the likes of FIFA, Tiger Woods and even Madden garnering far more attention and Great British pounds, it can feel like we're preaching the gospel to an almost deserted church.

Of course, there will be those among you already converted to this ice-cool piece of sporting action. *NHL 13* may not have been quite as illustrious a step forward for the franchise as seen in previous years (with earlier titles introducing features such as twin-stick control and growing evolutions of EA's physics engine), but it was still one of the best sports titles of the year. So whether football, golf, basketball or baseball is your thing, it's worth giving NHL more than a passing glance.

So how about the fresh gaming delights that *NHL 14* will bring... well, judging by the initial announcement, there's nothing particularly revolutionary here, but it's certainly an ambitious refinement over games that have gone before it. The Player Impact Engine (first seen in FIFA, but with foundations in the NHL series) is being reworked and the brawling system is getting a touch of the *Fight Nights* about it, with EA describing *NHL 14* as being about "big hits, real fights and unbelievable speed and skill". Sounds about right to us. ■





BLAME CANADA

EA Canada is effectively the home of EA Sports and clearly it's not afraid to trade ideas across its titles. The likes of the Player Impact Engine and Precision Passing have been bounced back and forth between FIFA and NHL, with *NHL 14* offering even more detailed collision physics for spectacular (and realistic) hits. Meanwhile the all-important fighting for *NHL 14* is being rebuilt using the same Enforcer Engine seen in the Fight Night series, with all players remaining 'in the game' while the fisticuffs progresses from gloves-off to the penalty box.

There's a new third-person perspective to the brawling, too, and you can more accurately target punches for a far more authentic experience. Heck, it even draws on detailed stats to work out the more aggressive players and balances their size and strength to determine the more likely winner.

Elsewhere, the twin-stick system that also found a home in Fight Night is being tweaked to allow for greater control on the ice. Hits are controlled with the left stick, while a new one-touch deke system enables you to check opponents and skip past flailing sticks with a tap of a button - which should in turn open up quicker moves and more intuitive combos.



NICE ICE BABY

The True Performance Skating engine is another feature getting the 2.0 treatment, with even more animations (EA claimed 1,000 of them when it was introduced in *NHL 13*) and far more fluent and natural blade work. We're told *NHL 14* will offer "enhanced lateral skating" as well as improved acceleration, including "explosive first strides" which we hope doesn't refer to a pair of trousers.

As you'd expect, the Be a Pro career mode is also getting a makeover, this time under the "Live the Life" mantra. The idea is that you control your player outside the rink as well as on it, dealing with teammates, fans, management and the media. It all sounds a bit *New Star Soccer* to us, but you can trust EA to offer a little more depth than that. Online, too, should be a far sturdier animal in *NHL 14*, with full Online Seasons offering promotion and relegation to sort the wheat from the chaff, and you can be sure that the card-collecting Ultimate Team will have a few new aces up its sleeve.

Even if ice hockey isn't your preferred slice of sporting goodness, *NHL 14* is still worth keeping an eye on. Rookies might want to consider this their four-month warning to learn the offside rule.



CASTLE OF ILLUSION

HEY MICKEY, YOU'RE SO FINE...

PUBLISHER:
Sega

DEVELOPER:
Sega Studios
Australia

RELEASED:
Summer 2013

No sooner had our faces cooled after the slap of nostalgia that *DuckTales Remastered* gave us last issue, when along came Sega's *Castle of Illusion* to kick us squarely in the 16-bit nuts. The two certainly share many similarities, with the same side-scrolling platform gameplay and the obvious Disney theme, but while *DuckTales* helped shape the genre, *Castle of Illusion* paved the way for an entire generation of gaming.

To give the game its full title, *Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse* first came out back in 1990 for the Sega MegaDrive, with Master System and Game Gear versions doing the rounds soon after. Unsurprisingly you play as the House of Mouse's poster rodent, this time on a quest to rescue Minnie from the evil witch Mizrabel (can you

see what they did there?) who plans to steal her youth. To save the day, Mickey has to enter the Castle, recover seven coloured gems to build a rainbow bridge and jump on the witch's head a few times.

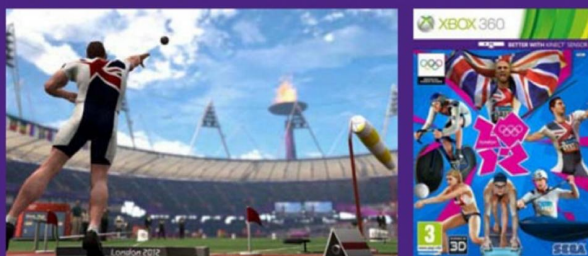
Well, that was how things were done back in the day. Besides basic jumping (and subsequently the classic 'bounce' attack for bumping foes off), Mickey could swing from vines and lightswitch cords, and throw apples or marbles to wipe out enemies and various obstructions, but that was pretty much it. This was plenty back in 1990 and we loved it, but developer Sega Studios Australia is also planning to offer up new gameplay mechanics as well as adding some swish new 3D backdrops to the 2.5D action with the visual makeover.

The precise nature of the changes are yet to be announced, though we'd wager that they're small, technical elements as the Aussie dev team is collaborating with the original director Yoshio Yoshida (formerly of Sega's AM7 studio) to enhance ideas that were touted back in the late Eighties but didn't make it into the final game. We're told that the game is being rebuilt from the ground up, in that increasingly familiar "re-imagining" process, and early signs are that the graphics should be on a par with *Epic Mickey 2*. If the gameplay can match the original *Castle of Illusion* with a suitably modern twist, then this should be a far superior title.

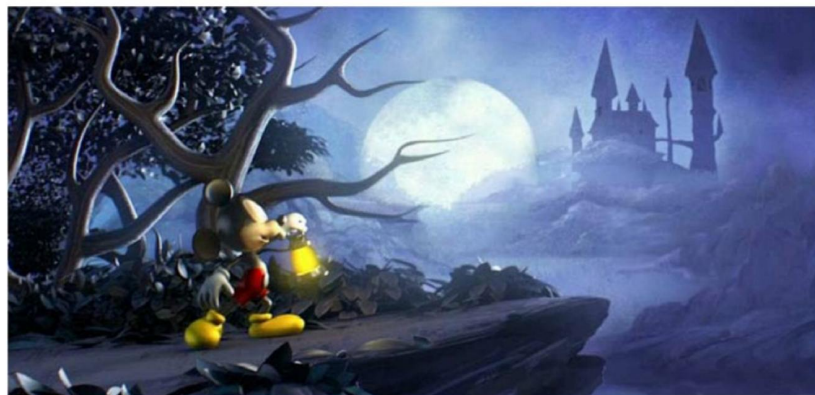
Certainly any sizeable diversions from the brilliant and beautiful original would be frowned upon, so perhaps

BELOW RIGHT:
Obviously the original developer didn't have to worry about lighting effects or 3D environments back in 1990.

CREATIVE SPARK



SEGA STUDIOS AUSTRALIA: Formed in Brisbane in 1992, it was initially part of the Creative Assembly team, coding *Medieval II: Total War* and *Stormrise* before bringing us the official *London 2012* game last year.



G'BYE: In early April, Sega announced that its Australian studio would be closing later this year.



Looks like you might get a choice of doors this time, enabling you to play through the stages in a different order.

RIGHT: Bouncing off these guys will kill them and can also give you a boost across the screen.

we can expect a little more creativity in terms of navigation and boss battles, but in a manner that won't turn retro fans into frothing balls of rage on internet forums. After all, it was the game's relative simplicity, coupled with a rich (and frequently surreal) world to explore that made *Castle of Illusion* such an appealing prospect in 1990.

Sure, you can find people now who'll blast from start to finish in under half an hour, but the thrill was discovering perfect paths and hidden shortcuts (such as the water slide that blitzed you through a large chunk of Stage 3). Remember those extra collectibles that boosted your score or shaved precious time and catapulted you up the highscore table? We suspect these features will make *Leaderboards* something of a big deal upon its Live Arcade arrival.

We're already pretty much sold on this one – these screens bring back enough fuzzy reminders of the original, while looking slick and polished enough to fit right in with the current generation gaming arena. And if this rebooted version of *Castle of Illusion* can throw in a few new tricks, an 'official' voiceover cast and perhaps the odd cameo appearance as a cheeky wink at the camera, we might never leave. ■

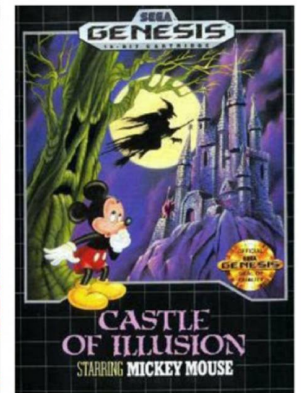
BELOW: Perhaps a few days in the sun would cheer her up?



TAKING THE MICKEY

The original *Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse* (or *I Love Mickey Mouse: Great Mysteries Castle Adventure* as it was brilliantly called in Japan) may seem largely generic these days, but it really did pave the way for a wealth of other games to follow suit – and not just those boasting Disney characters, either. It was the small things such as subtle details in the animations, vibrant background music and the simple yet perfectly weighted control system that made it stand out.

It wasn't without its surreal touches, of course, with quirky (but straightforward) boss fights and a level where you could enter a world made of cakes through a bottle of milk, while stages were frequently littered with so many items that it often became tricky to see what you could actually jump on. Things should be a lot clearer this time around, but we certainly hope these key elements remain in place.





MARS: WAR LOGS

A MARS A DAY HELPS YOU XBLA

Had *Mars: War Logs* been a standard retail release, we'd probably be scoffing about how it's riffing on the best parts of the likes of *Skyrim*, *Red Faction*, *Borderlands* and a host of RPGs from recent years. However, as it's coming to Live Arcade (and therefore at a much more agreeable price point) we can make a half-decent case that it'll be one of the more accomplished and detailed titles on the Marketplace.

Sure, *War Logs*' combination of melee-based combat along with a few 'technomagic' spells and the occasional headshot is fairly par for the course. And its aspirations for offering choice and consequence through dialogue trees, customisable skillsets and a crafting system may seem a little 'been there, done that' thanks to

PUBLISHER:
Focus Home
Interactive

DEVELOPER:
Spiders

RELEASED:
June 2013

RIGHT: Our boy Roy Temperance is your hero. He's got a dumb name but is deadly with an exhaust pipe.

BELOW: The native wildlife has suffered mutations from the Sun's radiation – and it can get a lot bigger than this fish-headed dog thingy.



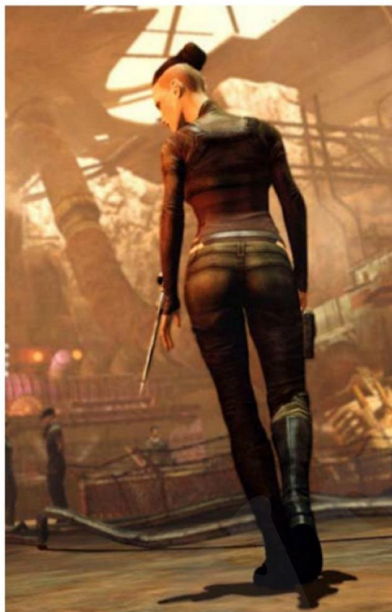
Combat seems to favour melee, at least early on in the game, with points visibly falling off an enemy's health bar with each blow.

There will be guns, but we expect ammo will be scarce – although Roy will also have access to some special electrical-based powers.

SILVER LININGS: *Spiders* was formed by veterans of the 2007 PC RPG, *Silverfall*.



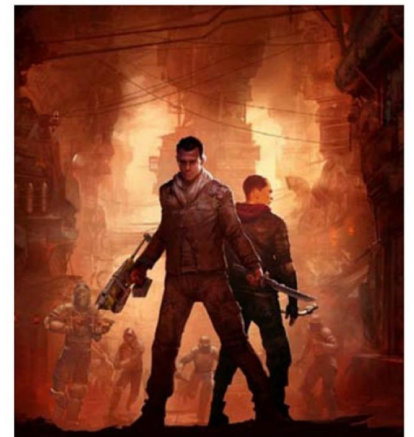
The devs call it Serum, you can call it mana, Salts or whatever – but Roy will have a few magic-powered tricks up his sleeve.



LEFT: With a distinctive cyberpunk vibe, there should be plenty of interesting places to explore.

Deus Ex and numerous others, but it's a noble offering for a Live Arcade title nonetheless.

If you think of *War Logs* as being 50% of what a mainstream RPG can offer but at only 25% of the price, then you can determine just how appealing a prospect it may be. Certainly being pitched into a war-torn Red Planet as an escaped prisoner tackling political, corporate, military, animal and mutated enemies isn't a bad starting point, so fingers crossed that *Mars: War Logs* can push its Live limitations to the limit. ■



LOOTIN' TOOTIN'

Mars: War Logs contains a rather detailed crafting system for creating armour items, weapon attachments/upgrades and suchlike – and that means you're going to have to get rummaging for supplies. Expect its depth to be limited by the game's size, but it's still good to see a Live Arcade RPG that isn't cutting too many corners.

WEB DEVELOPER



SPIDERS: This Parisian developer has been showing good budget pedigree since 2008, handling console ports of *Sherlock Holmes* as well as delivering its own decent RPG in *Of Orcs and Men*.





RIDE TO HELL: RETRIBUTION

EASY RIDER AND AN EASY LOVER

Maybe you can blame the *Grand Theft Auto IV* DLC, *The Lost and the Damned*. Perhaps the arrival of the hit TV show *Sons of Anarchy* changed a few perceptions of what people expected from biker culture. Maybe the game just sucked... Either way, we'd assumed that the original *Ride to Hell*, announced back in 2008 and geared to be a loving homage to the open-road outlaw biker lifestyle of the Sixties, had long since been kicked to the scrapyard.

But we guess you can't keep a good leather jacket down, because *Ride to Hell* is back with a fresh *Retribution* moniker and some far more brutal intentions. Certainly if the relaunch information and accompanying CGI trailer (complete with annoying visual effects for that authentic Sixties look)

are anything to go by, *Retribution* is something of a shameless boobs-and-brawling B-movie experience that doesn't pull any punches.

Your character is Jake Conway, a trained soldier described as "a man with either a gun in his hand or a girl in his lap", which makes *Retribution* appear about as cheesy as it gets, but we don't think the devs are shying away from its new over-the-top direction. The corpses in the trailer left with either a pool cue in their eye, a smashed bottle of booze ignited in their face or a phone receiver shoved into their gullet will attest to that.

It's a one-man army tale of revenge, then, as this lone biker takes on an entire gang using mostly his two fists, along with a few melee weapons and the occasional shotgun. There

PUBLISHER:
Deep Silver

DEVELOPER:
Eutechnyx

RELEASED:
28 June 2013

will be bike chases, too, with high-speed shootouts and all manner of destruction on two wheels and two feet. Throw in a pretty sweet soundtrack to boot and *Ride to Hell: Retribution* has some good things going for it – but don't get too carried away just yet.

The game was relaunched less than three months before its release date, which means it has either been in development for a while and not been deemed in a good enough state to show to the public, or it's something of a late call to take the previously dead *Ride to Hell* and hastily repackage it in order to hit a quiet gap in the gaming market this summer.

The CGI trailer showing nothing of the actual gameplay didn't help, while even a secondary teaser featuring a

BELOW: There should be plenty of melee weapons at hand to make the core combat a little more interesting.



EARLY DOORS: As *Zeppelin*, the devs made many classic Nineties sports titles, including *Match of the Day* and *International Soccer*.



few genuine clips did little to make us think that this will be more than a routine brawler with a few bike chases and shootouts thrown in. Of course, *The Lost and the Damned* and *Sons of Anarchy* have covered those leather-clad bases pretty well already, so you can forgive us if we don't set our expectation levels quite that high for *Ride to Hell: Retribution*. ■



ABOVE: A redneck holding a deadly weapon in front of Old Glory: as American as apple pie.

RIGHT: The original premise was more about the thrill of the open road. We hope some of that remains in *Retribution*.



YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE FAITH...

Perhaps there's a certain sense of obligation behind Deep Silver offering pre-order incentives for *Retribution*, because we can't imagine many people rushing out to throw down cash on something that's been clinically dead for four years and suddenly reappears less than three months before its launch. But those of you with a heavy penchant for bikes, brawling and Sixties rock music who do take the plunge before the end of June will be rewarded with the free *Cook's Mad Recipe* DLC (which will cost 800 MSP post-launch). It includes extra missions and an exclusive sniper rifle... don't all rush in at once.

Interestingly Deep Silver seems to have enough faith in the brand that it will be launching not just *Retribution*, but a further TWO *Ride to Hell* titles as well. All we know so far is that *Ride to Hell: Route 666* will be a Live Arcade 'tactical combat' game, while details on *Ride to Hell: Beatdown* are still to be announced (though the name suggests something of a bar-room brawler). We can't help but think these are just elements of the original game that had nowhere else to go.



THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOON



EUTECHNYX: Founded in 1987 as *Zeppelin Games*, this *Gateshead*-based studio has been mostly focused on racing titles such as *Street Racing Syndicate* and, more recently, the *NASCAR* series.

PUBLISHER:
Tru Blu Games

DEVELOPER:
Sidhe

RELEASED:
Summer 2013



RUGBY CHALLENGE 2: THE LIONS TOUR EDITION



TRY AND TRY AGAIN

Bagging the licence for the Lions tour is certainly no bad thing, and it should in turn offer up a few new teams and extra challenges for competitive play (if not the actual main career mode). This looks to be a purely aesthetic addition to the series, however, and a handful of new teams won't be enough to justify shelling out on a second helping of Rugby Challenge if *Jonah Lomu* is still spinning in your disc drive on a regular basis.

The Lions Tour Edition does incorporate some new gameplay features that should add a little more depth and realism to the action, though. We'll give you the full list since some of these might be more important to you than others, while some may just work to confuse the controls a little more - and we won't know which ones until we get hands-on with the action.

Rugby Challenge 2 adds quick taps and quick lineouts (with mauls from lineouts also now included), you can make interceptions, contest the ball at the breakdown, have your number eight pick up the ball from a scrum and remove players from rucks. Nothing groundbreaking, but you should still see some improvements to the overall gameplay.



Considering how much money FIFA makes EA on an annual basis, it's a little surprising that there isn't at least one definitive rugby series out there. Sure, those so-called 'egg-chasers' may be in the minority when compared to their multi-millionaire sporting rivals, but there should be enough demand for at least one franchise to get a firm, if low-budget, foothold on the market.

It's not for the want of trying, though, with EA itself having a stab at turning the oval ball into big bucks in the last decade, and the likes of *Rugby World Cup 2011* and Alternative Software's *Rugby League Live* series doing their best to keep modern rugby fans entertained. But perhaps this sub-genre needs some kind of big money impact title, or at least a daring innovation, because the repeated grind of rather basic, though playable and rewarding rugby games doesn't seem to be making much headway.

Take *Rugby Challenge 2* here. Not to be confused with 2006's *Rugby Challenge* (developed by Alternative), this is actually a follow up to *Jonah Lomu Rugby Challenge* from 2011. Well, we call it a "follow up" because it's not really worthy of the term "sequel", as it seems like much the same game only with the British and Irish Lions 2013 Tour of Australia licence and a few extra tweaks thrown in. Even the press release is almost a copy-and-paste features list from two years ago, making this more of a side-step than a real move forward for the (virtual) sport.



FOR THOSE ABOUT TO RUCK

The visuals should be getting something of a makeover, too, though we suspect this will be more through tweaks to the physics engine rather than a complete ground-up overhaul of the players and animations. That said, the creation and customisation options are being expanded so expect some improvements there.

Obviously the new teams and players should require a little effort, and the game now boasts more than 110 teams and 50 stadiums from around the globe. It might not seem like a patch on FIFA's roster, but it's to the developer's credit that the game includes teams and competitions from the Aviva Premiership, French and Scottish leagues and across the southern hemisphere, as well the likes of the All Blacks, Qantas Wallabies and the Barbarians.

There's not a lot else that's new in terms of core features, however, with the same single-player and online modes being touted that we saw back in 2011. But still, *Jonah Lomu* offered up pretty solid 7 out of 10 gameplay and with a little spit and polish we'd be expecting more of the same here. With the lack of any defining rugby title on the market (in the UK, at least – they're still ripe out in Australasia) we guess many rugby fans will just be happy with whatever small slice of oval ball action they can get.



SHERLOCK HOLMES: CRIMES & PUNISHMENTS

STEP ASIDE, BATMAN – DADDY'S HOME

Although Batman may lay claim to the title of 'World's Greatest Detective', and with some pretty good reasons, the original super-sleuth is Sherlock Holmes. Able to resolve a number of deductions from little more than a passing glance at someone's shoes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic creation is the maestro of the mystery and it really is to everyone's collective shame that there hasn't been a Holmes game to match the likes of *Batman: Arkham Asylum*.

It's not for the want of trying, of course, and *Crimes & Punishments* will be Frogwares' and Focus Home Interactive's seventh mainstream collaboration in bringing Sherlock to the small screen – and those previous titles haven't been all *that* bad. We've enjoyed the majority of them, but we're still not enamoured enough to justify labelling any of them as being truly great games.

So will *Crimes & Punishments* finally be able to break into the big time? The developer clearly hopes so, and it looks to be building upon the various hits and misses of the previous titles. It's adopted Epic's Unreal Engine 3 to help brush up on the visuals, for starters (see some reasons to be happy in the 'Real Deal' boxout), which it's promising will lead to bigger environments and "more

PUBLISHER:
Focus Home
Interactive

DEVELOPER:
Frogwares Studio

RELEASED:
TBC 2013

RIGHT: "Can't we just blame the butler and get back to that cocaine party?" probably isn't a dialogue option.

BELOW: Lighting effects, depth of field... yep, things are looking better alright.



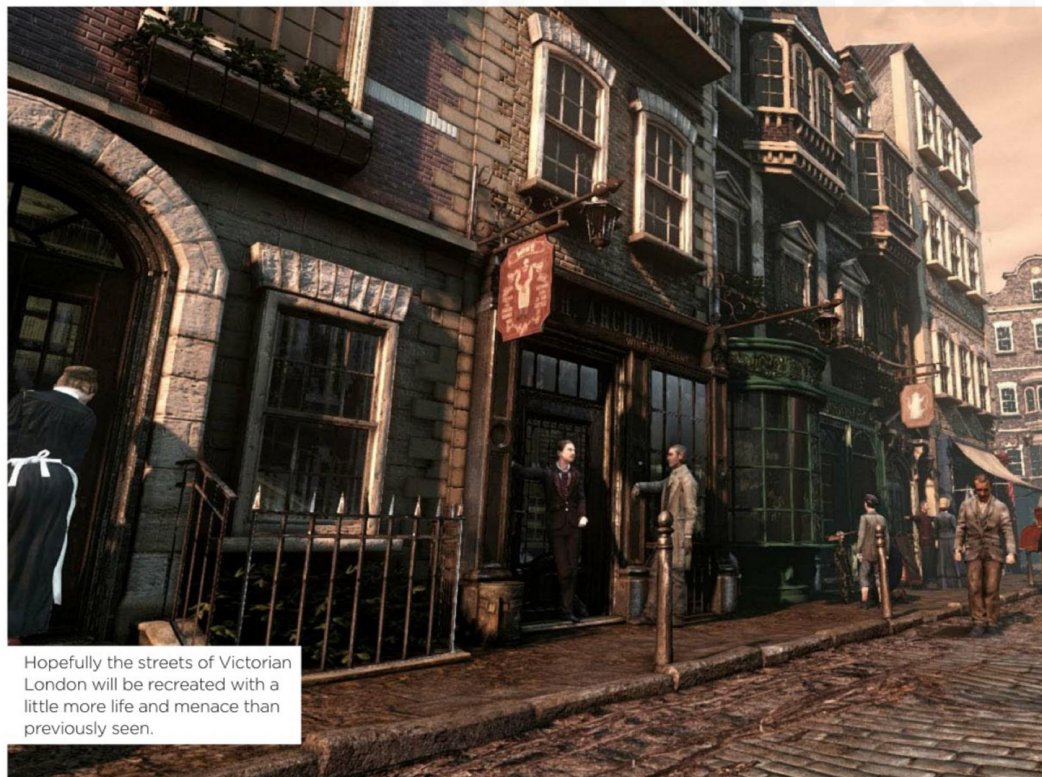
THE REAL DEAL

At the heart of Frogwares' ambitions to push the Sherlock Holmes franchise further, to truly maximise the detective's obvious potential for gaming greatness, is its recent adoption of Unreal Engine 3. The engine has been the core of well over 150 titles since Epic Games first unveiled this third iteration, including such franchises as *Gears of War*, *Batman*, *Borderlands*, *Mass Effect* and *Mortal Kombat*, and recent hits *BioShock Infinite*, *DmC* and *XCOM: Enemy Unknown*.

Certainly the engine is capable of delivering some kick-ass visuals and using it will free up the developer from the trials of managing its own engine. But it is worth noting that Frogwares is a much smaller studio than Epic or BioWare, so its scope may still be comparatively limited.



LEMON ENTRY: In Doyle's books, Holmes never actually says the phrase "elementary, my dear Watson."



Hopefully the streets of Victorian London will be recreated with a little more life and menace than previously seen.

gorgeous and more varied" settings. We'll certainly take improved detail, with dynamic lighting and superior animations over the rather jerky and awkward-looking nature of those earlier games.

It's also a welcome move to bring Sherlock himself back to the centre of the storyline. Other videogames (like Doyle's work, admittedly) have treated Holmes more like a secondary character and not really given us the definitive experience of actually stepping into his shoes and solving cases like a boss. *Crimes & Punishments* may well redress the balance, as this is being billed as a *real* investigation experience – and that's really all we've ever wanted.

You'll have to search crime scenes using new investigation mechanics to

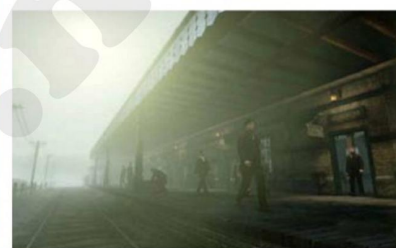
observe and collect clues. You'll also get to use Holmes' skills to reconstruct sequences of events using key details that you can then draw on (via your interactive casebook and the revamped Deduction Board) to make your own decisions about who did what, to whom, and how. There will be those quick-fire deductions that Holmes is famous for (and recreated with such aplomb in his recent BBC resurrection) but this should be a more measured affair, offering more open choices and consequences based upon the decisions you make.

You'll have eight major cases to crack, with twelve possible endings across them, and there will also be moral choices that will tease your conscience – would you push the boundaries of the law or will you play

RIGHT TOP: A quick glance at the corpse and Sherlock already knows that the dead guy was having an affair with a goat named Sue.

RIGHT BOTTOM: We're able to deduce from this screenshot that a trip to Doncaster should be on the cards.

BELOW LEFT: The added detail of Unreal Engine 3 should bring an extra layer of atmosphere to proceedings.



things strictly by the book? Either way you'll get to delve into the darker side of murder, disappearances and high-profile heists in a manner we're assured is very much in the "Conan Doyle tradition".

Don't get us wrong, we've been misguidedly optimistic about far too many titles (including Frogware's last entry) to pin our hopes on *Crimes & Punishments* being the ultimate Sherlock adventure we've been waiting on for so long. But the signs are looking promising for at least a notable step up from last year's *Testament of Sherlock Holmes* and we're definitely looking forward to some more extended hands-on time than we've seen to date. Maybe it's a case of seventh time lucky. We certainly hope so; Sherlock deserves a classic. ■



A NOVEL APPROACH



FROGWARES: With offices in France, Ireland and Ukraine, the dev has worked primarily on Sherlock Holmes titles – but it did dabble with *Dracula* in 2008 and the works of Jules Verne before that.



DISNEY INFINITY

LIMITLESS FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY?

It's hard not to be impressed by *Disney Infinity* – the sheer scope that the developers have sunk into freeing up gamers of all ages to play around with the toys at their disposal is almost like dropping Skylanders into a *Minecraft* sandbox where just about anything goes. The free-for-all Toy Box mode is a place where the answer to any question starting with, “Can I...?” is usually, “Yes – and why not drop this in while you’re doing it?”

The younger gamers can get their kicks out of seeing characters from their favourite films messing around in themed worlds that can have you racing cars, speeding around on horseback or just knocking a football around. The older gamers (and we’re talking anyone into double figures and well beyond) can immerse themselves

PUBLISHER:
Disney Interactive

DEVELOPER:
Avalanche Software

RELEASED:
20 August 2013

BELOW: These chaps are the three characters you’ll get in the Starter Pack on launch. The rest? Well, they’re gonna cost you.



BOULDER DASH: *Avalanche Software isn't to be confused with the Swedish Just Cause developer, Avalanche Studios.*



Creating worlds is as simple as dragging and dropping items from a menu. The real trick is making everything work together.



RIGHT: Yep, that's Dumbo packing dual miniguns alright. Well, we *did* say that pretty much anything goes.

in the wealth of tools that enable you to sculpt huge interactive worlds, or just a creative homage to anything from the Disney universe.

Our only real concern is that the developers remember to put an actual game in there as well. Skylanders succeeded because the interactive items added to the gaming experience as much as the world within it, and *Disney Infinity* needs to ensure that it does the same. But given how good a job Avalanche did with *Toy Story 3*, we're pretty excited about this being all sorts of *Incredibles*. ■



LEFT: It's not exactly FIFA, but there are probably far more creative ways to add some footy based action to your world.

MONEY EQUALS POWER

There will be four key Power Discs (bestowing 20% health, 10% damage, 10% faster wealth or -10% damage taken) as well as eight themed Hex discs for changing your Toy Box world. You'll get one in your Starter Pack and then packs of two will cost you £3.99 each – only, like stickers, you're buying them blind. So, erm... good luck!

CARTOON CODERS



AVALANCHE SOFTWARE: Formed in 1995, this Utah-based studio was recently refocused on all things Disney, giving us impressive ties for the likes of *Meet the Robinsons*, *Cars 2* and *Toy Story 3*.



PUBLISHER:
Activision
DEVELOPER:
High Moon Studios
RELEASED:
28 June 2013



DEADPOOL



HIGH HOPES

No one likes to see a developer in trouble, of course, and we've long had faith in High Moon being able to mix it with the big boys. Despite all the things that could go horribly wrong with it, we even had some glimmer of optimism that *Deadpool* might turn out to be okay after all. Certainly if you've seen the dev's work on *Darkwatch* back in 2005, its decent stab at nudging into the mainstream with 2008's *The Bourne Conspiracy* (as solid a 7 out of 10 game as you'll see) or how it made the best of a middling franchise with its two *Transformers Cybertron* games, you wouldn't write it off.

With stalwart *Deadpool* writer Daniel Way on scripting duties and voice veteran Nolan North doing what he does best, plus a host of the self-aware superhero's Marvel buddies (and foes) turning up for the ride, *Deadpool* could still surprise many of us. That said, it's a month from launch and we still haven't played preview code or seen anything of the game in action besides a few carefully orchestrated trailers – and that's rarely a good sign. *Deadpool* can certainly talk the talk, but right now he's walking with a heck of a limp.



You have to wonder just what's going on over at Activision Blizzard. The publisher is making bundles of money from its three core cash cows – Call of Duty, Skylanders and World of Warcraft – and you can be sure it's spunking wheelbarrows of \$50 bills over for Bungie to transform *Destiny* into a fourth. But everything else around those powerful pillars seems to be falling into a state of utter decay.

Let's take a look at its recent list of console releases: *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct*, *Family Guy: Back to the Multiverse*, *007 Legends* and even *Men in Black: Alien Crisis*. All shockingly poor titles for a studio that treats *Modern Warfare* as if it were the son of god. Aside from *Black Ops II*, its best games of the past 12 months have been *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *Transformers: Fall of Cybertron* – yes, we know.

And those kinds of dismal 'secondary' failures don't come without a price; since the beginning of 2010, Activision has closed down no fewer than six of its development studios, including the likes of Red Octane (after the oversaturation of *Guitar Hero* killed the music genre) and racing maestro Bizarre Creations. And at the beginning of April it announced that High Moon Studios would be losing 40 of its staff, "To better align our development talent against our slate. We are offering those employees who are impacted outplacement counselling services." Gee, thanks.

The only good news is that those now ex-employees had finished their work on the upcoming 'Merc with a Mouth' title, and *Deadpool* will still see the light of day... although what will happen to High Moon Studios come June isn't looking good.



'POOL PARTY

Forgive our scepticism. It's been ingrained after years of disappointment and Activision's awful track record does little to ease our concerns (*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *The Fast & The Furious* up next; what could possibly go wrong?). But could *Deadpool* actually turn out to be alright? Maybe... it's got "Katanas, big guns, hot chicks" and "crazy poop-your-pants action", if you believe the fictional fella himself. Which basically boils down to Batman-esque gameplay with some Spider-Man acrobatics, only with a sword and handguns rather than Batarangs and web-slinging. Oh, and a steady stream of bad knob jokes, innuendo and lots of talk about boobs.

The 'jokes' could wear thin pretty quickly, though they may be a laugh if you don't mind leaving your brain at the door when you walk in. The inclusion of Wolverine, Domino, Cable, Psylocke and Red Hulk (and possibly others from his X-Men/X-Force days) should make for a decent storyline, considering that they've all pretty much tried to kill one another over the years. The character's patented fourth wall breakage might just create an interesting link with the action and maybe, just maybe, *Deadpool* could rise above Activision's abject failures of late. We just wouldn't bet our last chimichanga on it.

360gamer Mags.net Reviews

INDEPENDENT OPINION YOU CAN TRUST

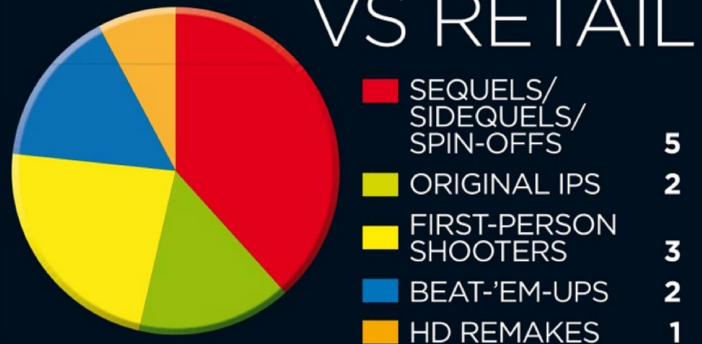


DIFFERENT STROKES

Completely unsurprisingly, our favourite games this month aren't the IP-whoring sequels of established franchises but rather original games that dare to do something a bit different. You know, something new – like *new games* are supposed to do. *Brothers* is nothing short of an absolute delight; a creative treat that we really wish we saw more of on consoles these days. And as for *Blood Dragon*, it might actually be even more enjoyable than *Far Cry 3*. And these are Live Arcade games! Rehashed retail fare like *Last Light* and *Riptide* just don't cut the mustard by comparison.

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LIVE ARCADE VS RETAIL



“We’ve had to wait for it longer than most, but this is one prize fighter that’s only going to get better with age”

PERSONA 4 ARENA – 78

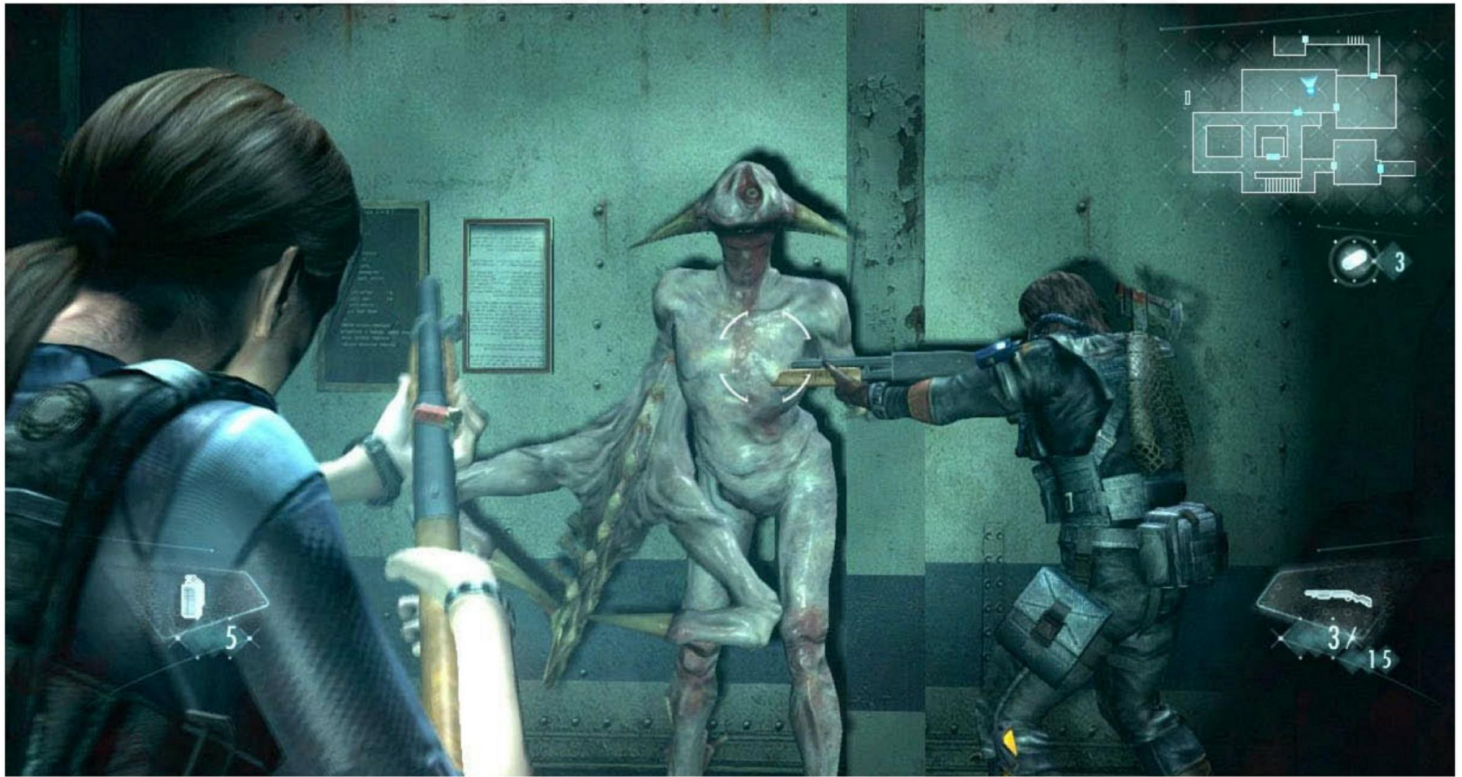
80





RESIDENT EVIL REVELATIONS

OLD SCHOOL RESI IS BACK
- AND IT'S GOING TO SCARE
THE SHIP OUT OF YOU...



PUBLISHER:
Capcom
DEVELOPER:
Capcom
RELEASED:
Out now
AGE:
16 PEGI
PLAYERS:
1-2
XBOX LIVE:
Yes
PRICE:
£39.99

www.capcom-europe.com

PLUS

- + Brings back the mansion set-up
- + The gunplay is nice and precise
- + Raid mode has lots of depth
- + Can still be tense in places

MINUS

- Not enough enemy variation
- Why do we have to fight in pairs?

As much as we love its output, it often seems like Capcom is hell bent on making hairbrained decisions that infuriate its fans. One of the more recent examples was the on-disc DLC that barred players from using certain characters in *Street Fighter x Tekken*. And if you're a fan of Switch Axes and Hunting Horns, the absence of online support for the 3DS version of *Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate* has left some players feeling more than a bit miffed. But out of all the questionable decisions that Osaka's unruly son has made in recent years, the Resident Evil series has arguably borne the brutal brunt of it.

Although *Resident Evil 6* was far from a bad game, it suffered from what we can only described as cutting

room floor syndrome. Whether it was the stealth section where you had to punch some patrolling moths in the back or the opportunity to drive and pilot just about every type of vehicle in existence, it was clear that the development team was more concerned with padding out the game rather than chopping the chaff and



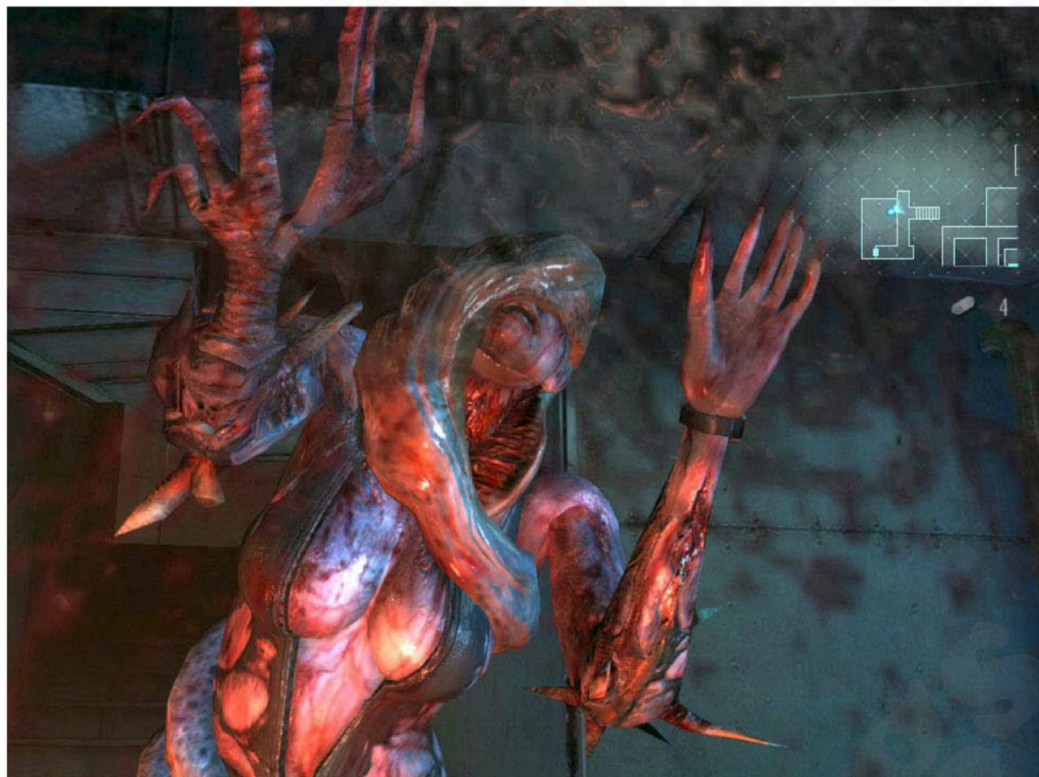
BELOW: Well, it just wouldn't be a Resident Evil game if there weren't a few cogs missing along the way.



making something concise. It was also confirmation that the action hero act – something that started with *Resident Evil 4* – had taken the series far beyond what we knew as survival-horror. As underwhelming as *Resident Evil 6* was, though, it wasn't the only Resi game released in 2012.

While *Operation Raccoon City* won the award for blandest interpretation of a huge gaming licence, *Resident Evil Revelations* for the 3DS was an under-the-radar instalment that showcased the rendering capabilities of Nintendo's intriguing handheld. But more than that, it also proved that elements of the new and old Resident Evil games could be merged into something less conjoined and more complementary. The only real drawbacks were the handheld's modest install base and ergonomically cramped layout. Which prompted a bunch of fans to badger Capcom for a console adaptation and, whether it was through listening or the desire to print another paycheck, this time it delivered the goods.

Rather than being a salty spinoff, *Revelations* is set between *Resident Evil 4* and *5*. This makes it a similar venture to the classic *Code: Veronica* as, while the story doesn't push the timeline forwards, it fills us in on what the original Resi duo – Jill Valentine and Chris Redfield – were getting up



to before Wesker coerced Jill into doing his bidding. The bulk of the game takes place on a luxury cruise liner called the Queen Zenobia. A terrorist organisation called Veltro has unleashed a new viral strain called the T-Abyss virus. This turns the ship into a bio-weapon safari and, while this isn't the first time that Capcom has experimented with the ghost ship theme, this is by far the most watertight Resi in years.

The fact that this is an enhanced port of a 3DS game is apparent in the graphics and overall composition. The environments are fairly restrained when it comes to additional details and the texture quality is far more in line with the GameCube games rather than anything we've seen this generation. But unless you have a no compromise attitude to polygon pushing, *Revelations* doesn't give the impression that its modest engine is holding it back. If anything, it makes up for these slight limitations with its focused level design and its return to tight corridors and locked doors. The Metroid-style progression was a cornerstone of the early mansions and, when combined with a more modern combat system, it still holds up well today.

Much as we love the old Resi games with their pre-rendered backgrounds

and woeful voice acting, though, there's no way we can go back to the pivot approach to aiming. In this regard, *Revelations* adopts the over-the-shoulder targeting that we know and love. Jill starts off with her basic 9mm but it isn't long before you're cleaning house with various shotguns, sniper rifles and machine guns. The campaign alone has around 15 weapons in total and the upgrade system enables you to customise

ABOVE: To be fair, we've probably dated a lot worse.

TOP RIGHT: Seeing as Chris and co are now packing assault rifles, it's seems only fair that the Hunters are now invisible.



ABOVE: Apparently Parker has already played through *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City*. Poor sod.

parts to increase everything from the magazine size to the chance of scoring a critical hit.

Slightly disappointing, though, is the lack of diversity of the enemies on show. The standard Ooze zombies look fairly imposing with their loose flesh and sucker-like mandibles that latch onto you whenever you get close, but aside from a few variations (which include the Tricorne that fires sharpened barbs and the Pincer that crushes you between its saw-like arms) there isn't the same level of enemy experimentation that the other games show. Although at least in terms of the challenge that each T-Abyss monstrosity represents, the way that they jerk towards you means that it's surprisingly hard to be consistent with the headshots.

One thing that you don't have to worry too much about is being frugal with your ammo. The enemies don't sweat bullets and grenades like some of the more recent games, but you'll never be short on shotgun shells or rifle rounds if you aim for the 'centre mass' and stay on target. This lends the game a more action-oriented experience in terms of combat, but that doesn't mean you won't feel a sense of unnerving apprehension when you're forced to return to an area where you know something is

TOTALLY BOSS

A large part of any Resident Evil game is the big bad bosses that lie in wait at the end of each section. While *Revelations* doesn't quite manage to top the likes of Nemesis or William Birkin in terms of mutagenic terror, the head horrors that it offers are still fairly high on the Tyrant Richter scale. One boss you'll face is called Scaghead; this shambling mass distinguishes itself from the garden-variety Ooze thanks to the fleshy angle-grinder that it has attached to its right arm. Get close to this beast and you'll lose more than just your head. Make him stumble, however, and you can finish him off with a charged melee attack.





waiting. And if you do find yourself a little short on the healing herbs or ammo, the Genesis scanner will keep you in the black.

Hold down the left bumper and the character you're controlling will pull out the scanner, which switches the view to first-person. From here you can sweep the room for hidden objects that will keep you topped up on the most important supplies. The Genesis also comes in handy when you come across Hunters that have taken a leaf out of the Predator book of tricks. At times the scanning can feel like a bit of chore, as you repeat the cycle of emptying a roomful of enemies before spinning around like a wannabe Frank West, but as a means

of breaking up the combat it's a fairly unobtrusive addition.

Ever since Capcom paired Rebecca Chambers with Billy Coen in *Resident Evil Zero*, it's insisted on switching the duo dynamic from "we occasionally bump into each other" to a full-blown double act. *Revelations* follows suit with three two-person teams that include Jill with the hatchet-wielding Parker and Chris with the far more slender Jessica.

On this occasion the pairings work because the AI is competent and doesn't make a habit of standing between you and your target, but it does of course mean that you're rarely alone. Maybe it's just the rose-tinted glasses talking, but we genuinely miss

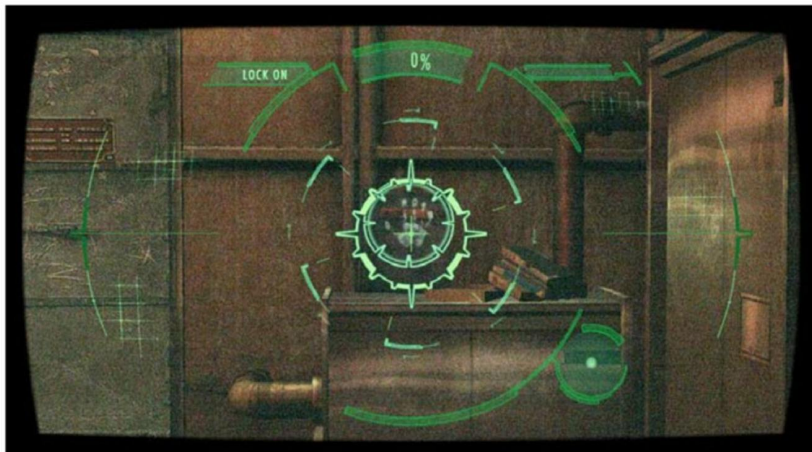


LEFT: Hidden within levels are handprints that can only be seen by using the Genesis scanner. Nifty.

the days of struggling to survive on our lonesome against nightmarish odds. Ah well.

What hasn't escaped Capcom's attention is the fact that many *Resident Evil* fans will have already rinsed *Revelations* on the 3DS. If that's the case then surely there'd be no point in playing through it again? That's definitely the case with the campaign as there are no additional cut-scenes, side-missions or even a new shooting range to speak of.

What there is, however, is a greatly expanded Raid Mode with Xbox Live support. Two players can join forces before working their way through 20 stages of increasingly difficult enemies. Raid mimics the mercenary modes of past games with its arcade-style combat. You can even see how much damage each chunk of shrapnel



CUSTOM MADE

In addition to the obligatory damage and clip size upgrades, the custom parts system sees you tweak your weapons with more specialised abilities. The Charge Shot mod enables you to depress the trigger on a pistol to do significantly more damage than a single bullet would normally inflict. Infighter, meanwhile, increases your damage output by up to 100% whenever you're standing within 100 metres of an enemy. Suffice to say that it makes more sense to bolt this onto a shotgun than a sniper rifle, unless you want to put your *Call of Duty* quick-scoping skills to the test against *Resi*'s bio-weapons.

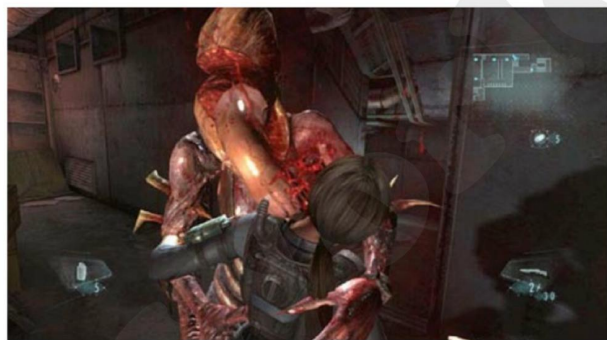
BELOW: Grinder and Jackass are the odd couple of the story. We're guessing those are not their real names.



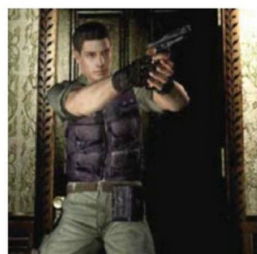
ABOVE: In the 3DS version you had to use the touchscreen to unlock the odd panel, but now it's all automated.

inflicts on the Ooze as the numbers flash up on the screen.

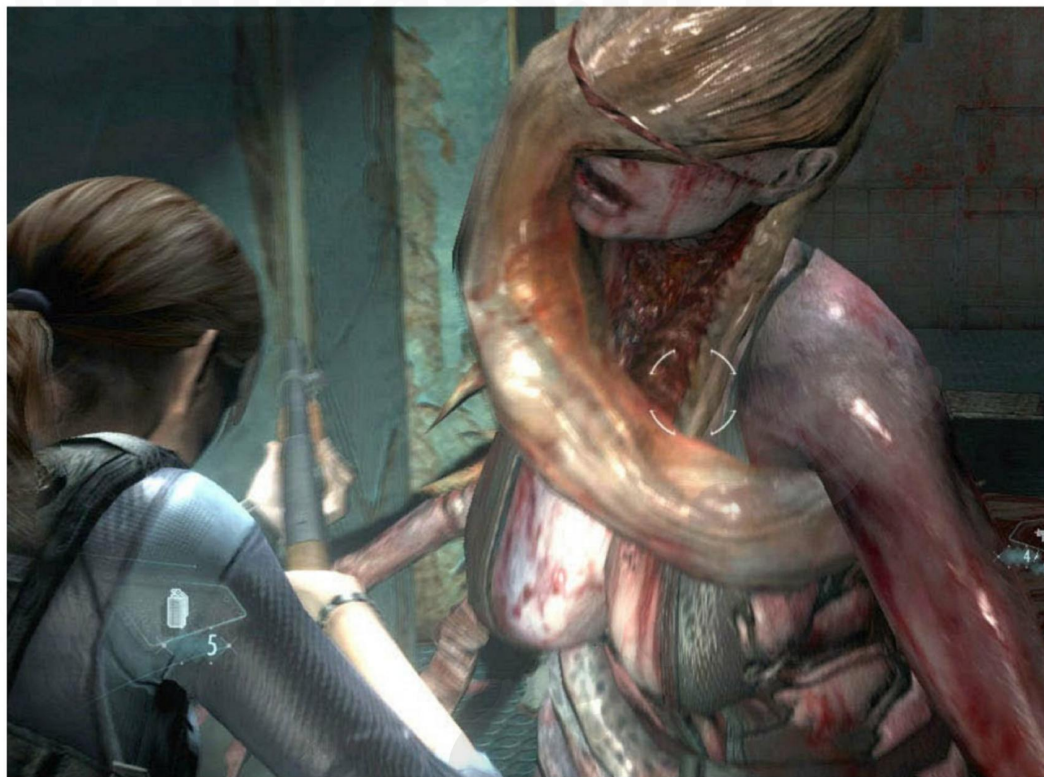
While the campaign will take you over 20 hours to finish, Raid adds significant mileage for fans that take as much pleasure from the gunplay as they do the foreboding atmosphere. And if you were hardcore enough to unlock the Handcannon in *Resident Evil 4* after succumbing to the double



GENERATIONS COLLIDE



RESIDENT EVIL + RESIDENT EVIL 4: Introduces the old mansion formula to new action gunplay. And does it well.



ABOVE: If you really don't like having your personal space invaded, *Revelations* may not be for you.

BELOW: When an Ooze latches onto you it'll try to suck out your bodily fluids. It's less fun than it sounds.

chainsaw more times than you care to remember, Raid could potentially be the lion's share of this package. By completing missions you also earn money, which can be used to buy better weapons and more effective upgrades, then by the time you reach the upper Trench and Abyss difficulties you'll be dodging telegraphed strikes while letting rip with the triple-barrelled shotgun. Oh yes.

For us to recommend *Resident Evil Revelations* therefore depends on your expectations. If you're hoping for a return to the classic games in form as well as function, the presence of machine guns with adequate ammo reserves and an AI partner that shouts cheesy lines after you've just cleared a room may leave you yearning for Barry Burton. But if you're looking for a game that takes the mansion structure of the classic games while reworking it into a boat show where you can move and shoot at the same time – albeit slowly – then *Revelations* may just be the herbal remedy you've been looking for.

This isn't the game that's going to save the series from its current identity crisis and it's not irrefutable proof that Capcom has turned over a new leaf. It's just a damned good *Resident Evil* game that lives up to the series' ongoing legacy. ■



ABOVE: The gold case means that this is an illegal customisation part. You basically get more bang for your buck.

VERDICT

The best gaming series are the ones that can evolve and innovate with the times while staying true to what made them so utterly compelling in the first place. But at the same time, it's a fine balance between sticking with what worked in the past while trying new concepts that push the series forward. In this sense, the original Resident Evil was the proof of concept while Resident Evil 4 was the game-changing revolution. Revelations takes elements from both games and works them into something that sits between classic survival-horror and the new action approach. And it works for us.

8

BROTHERS: A TALE OF TWO SONS



THE FAMILY THAT PLAYS TOGETHER...



ARCADIE

PUBLISHER:
505 Games

DEVELOPER:
Starbreeze

RELEASED:
July 2013

AGE:
16 PEGI

PLAYERS:
1

XBOX LIVE:
No

PRICE:
TBC

www.brothersthegame.com

PLUS

- + Two character set-up
- + Simple yet highly rewarding gameplay
- + Charming style...
- + ...but with a grim, dark twist

MINUS

- Under four hours
- The twin controls are a bit tricky

To say that *Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons* is unlike anything you have played before would be doing games like *Limbo* a disservice – games, mainly Live Arcade ones, that take the traditional platform-exploration premise and give it a twist. But certainly *Brothers* deserves incredible credit for taking a simple genre and delivering one of the more memorable, and all too short, Arcade experiences of the year.

Brothers' key twist is that it offers twin character controls via a single controller: you operate the older of two brothers on the left stick and trigger, the younger on the right, as the two seek out a Tree of Life with which to find a cure for their dying father. It's a system that combines co-op gameplay with some neat variations, as each sibling will interact with certain items or characters in different ways, and it really sets the game apart and makes the whole experience that much more immersive and warming.

The controls can take a little getting used to, particularly the coordination required if you want to steer them both around at the same time (there's a chase sequence that may take a few repeat tries). But there is rarely any pressure to move at a speed you're not comfortable with – and navigation

is usually fairly obvious or a simple case of trial and error to figure things out. For example, you may need to combine the two to offer a boost up a ledge or swing from an adjoining rope between climbing points. Elsewhere you may need to use the younger brother to creep through a small gap to rotate one lever, while his sibling pulls another switch.

There are plenty of other inspired examples of this "single-player co-op" working delightfully well, be it steering a boat up an icy river, carrying heavy pipes through tight corners like burly removal men with a sofa, or working together to outwit the couple of mini-boss fights that you'll face. There are other great touches, too, such as the troll you'll meet who will help you with your platforming, throwing you across ledges or stretching out to act as a bridge. Or the benches you can sit on to give yourself a glorious panoramic view. And while the visuals may not quite hold up on close inspection, they certainly do a beautiful job in setting the scene.

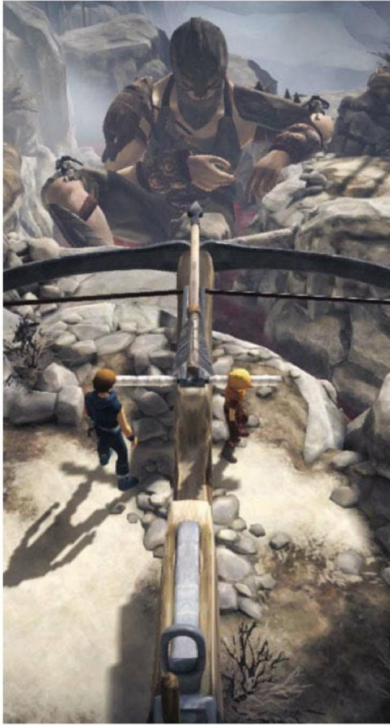
It's not the safe, child-friendly world that you might be expecting, either, as the game takes several grim turns – especially in the second half, with dead giants lying scattered in the aftermath of battle, a suicidal local mourning the death of his family in



ABOVE: One great section sees the two tied together and swinging between handholds.

BELOW: We did mention that this isn't a child-friendly adventure, right? Expect plenty of dark turns along the way.





ABOVE: Yes, you *do* have to do exactly what you're thinking you should.

a fire (you can even pray by their covered corpses) and plenty of blood, sadness and surreal twists along the way. Let's just say that *Brothers'* creator and director, Josef Fares, is unlikely to be making a Disney movie any time soon.

However, that same path is also brilliantly littered with things for you to interact with, from a man with a harp (young bro plays it perfectly, old bro is terrible) to a kid playing basketball and goats you take for ride. In a genius touch, the Achievements also play on this, giving only teasers about what you need to do; one example asks, "Are bunnies colourblind?" and you'll find four black rabbits ignoring one white one. Dunk the white one in a coal patch and he'll be joyously reunited with his family and you'll get 20 whole Gamerpoints for your trouble... bless.

THE DARK ARTS

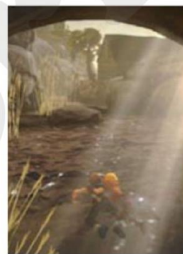


LIMBO + FABLE: There's some fairly straightforward platform and puzzling in a charming fantasy land but, like both of these titles, *Brothers* also has a darker edge.



ABOVE: There's a sweet sub-story that involves reuniting this troll with his lost love.

BELOW: In a nice touch the younger brother can't swim, forcing the older to interact and carry him across water.



But really *Brothers* plays out as a simple story, elegantly told, even if it is only largely inferred through grunts and gestures. The characters talk in a strange language but you'll still feel like you understand every word, and it's hard not to empathise with them and become engrossed in their trials and tribulations from one sumptuous area to the next.

There's nothing overly complex or any puzzles that will prove excessively taxing, and you simply can't help but be drawn into its world and feel a satisfying warmth from every inch of exploration. Even though it's a largely linear quest, there are several side-areas for additional interaction (and Achievement hunting!).

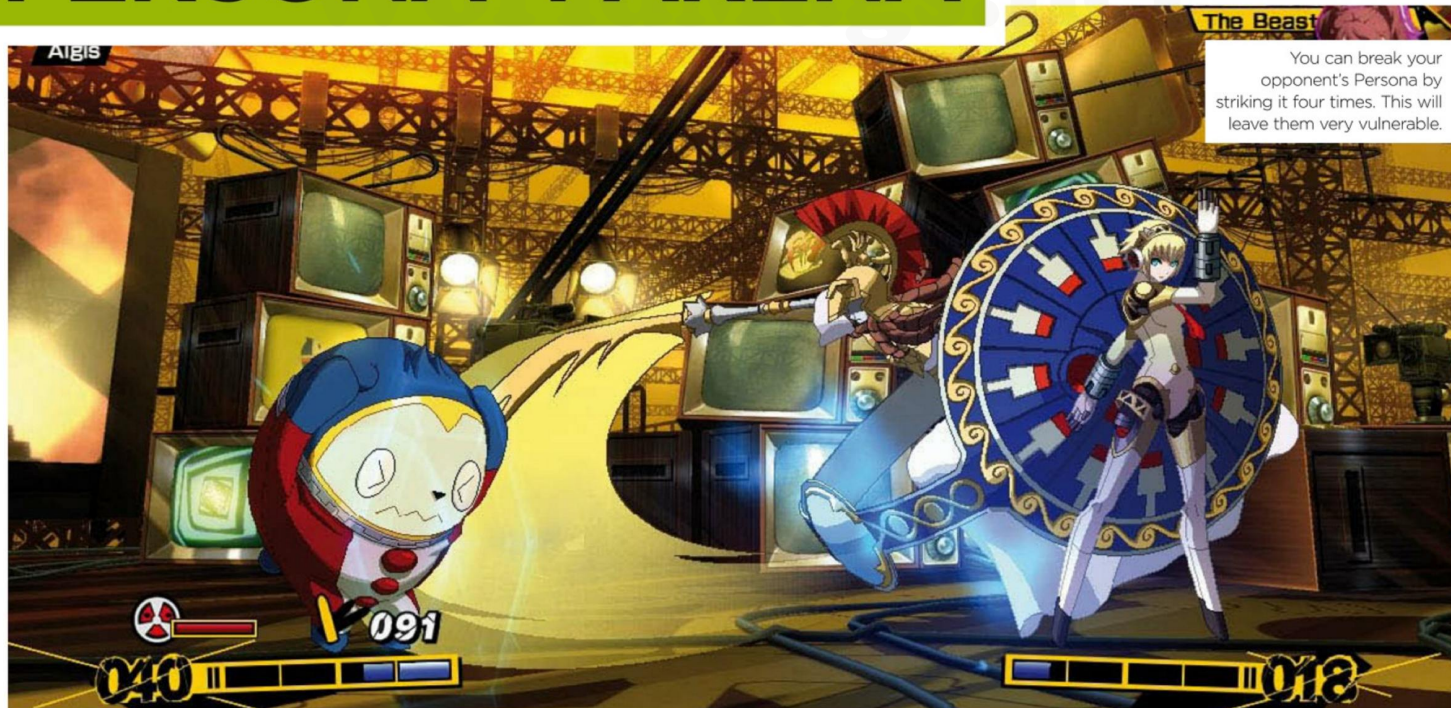
Brothers' only real problem is that it will take you barely three and a half hours to get from the opening scene to the end credits. It's a memorable journey, for sure, and while there are no divergent branches to really justify repeat play we can imagine ourselves going back for another viewing every couple of months or so. Obviously when it comes to tight budgets, that might not be quite enough for some to splash out. But if you'd consider an episode of Telltale Games' *The Walking Dead* a worthy purchase then we would heartily recommend finding a home for *Brothers*. ■



VERDICT

As the mainstream market continues to go for the bombastic, cinematic and spectacular, it's reassuring to see that games such as Brothers can brighten up our lives. It may be short, but it offers a brilliantly simple story and gameplay set-up that provides a neat 'co-op-in-single-player' twist and an adventure that will have you captivated from start to finish. It's a heartfelt experience, one that feels more human and charmingly endearing than we've become accustomed to, despite the bleakness entwined within its watercolour world. You may not be there for long, but we doubt that you'll regret one minute spent with Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons.

PERSONA 4 ARENA



GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT



PUBLISHER:
Zen United
DEVELOPER:
Arc System Works
RELEASED:
Out now
AGE:
12 PEGI
PLAYERS:
1-2
XBOX LIVE:
Yes
PRICE:
£39.99
www.personaeurope.com

PLUS

- + A fighting game in J-RPG clothing
- + Less intimidating combat system
- + Animated to near 2D perfection
- + A small but very diverse roster

MINUS

- Story mode waffles on a bit
- Needs a couple more modes

Back in the Super Nintendo and MegaDrive days, UK consumers often got overlooked by publishers in more ways than one. Sometimes it was a minor knock, like having to wait six months for the European launch of *Street Fighter II*, while other times it was the bitter pill of missing out on *Final Fantasy VI* entirely. Fortunately those days are long behind us and, when a Japanese game launches in the West, the release dates tend to be fairly uniform. Which makes it all the more surprising that *Persona 4 Arena* has taken so long to make the jump from the US to the UK.

The *Persona* series may not be a big name on the Xbox 360 but that hasn't stopped it from garnering a huge following on other platforms. It's particularly noteworthy for its interesting mix of J-RPG combat within the context of a secondary school simulator – one where your ability to summon powerful demons is fuelled by the social links you develop with your fellow students.

Its intriguing premise and colourful characters also make the perfect basis for a fighting game, so who better to oversee the transition from take-it-in-turns assaults to bread-and-butter combos than the mastermind behind the *BlazBlue* and *Guilty Gear* series: Arc System Works.

Considering its heritage, it's hardly a shock that *Arena* features an extensive Story Mode. The game takes place two months after *Persona 4* and sees the Yasogami classmates returning to The Midnight Channel – an alternate dimension of human subconsciousness that lies beyond the television screen. Each character walks their own path through the channel and, although there are a few fights along the way, the focus is more on reading through the extensive dialogue sequences. This is fine if you're a J-RPG nut that likes to get lost in the lore, of course, but fighter fans prefer their games to have a fair bit more bite.

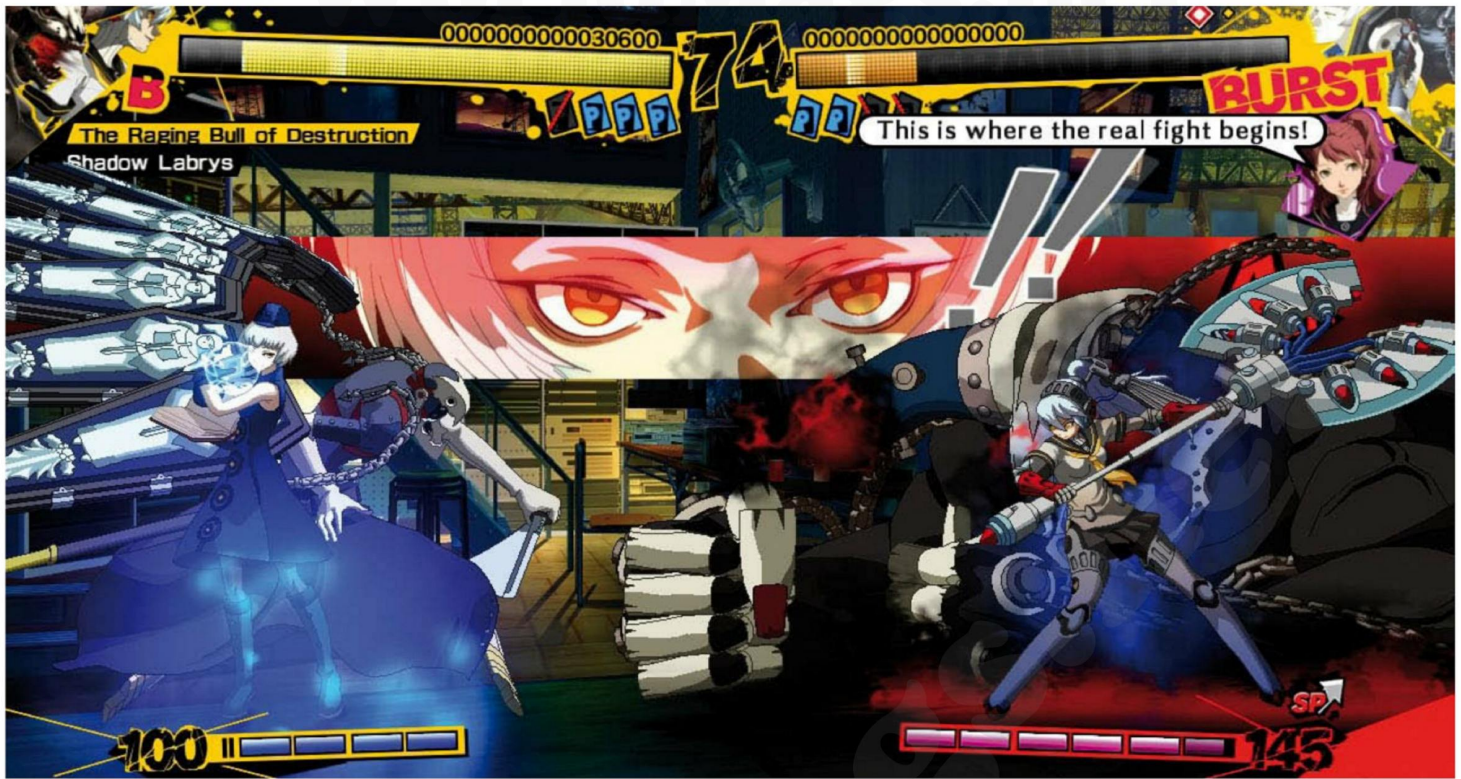
Thankfully, *Arena* caters just as well for *Persona* scholars as it does for arcade stick technicians, and if you're fortunate enough to fall into both camps then this could be your personal game of the year. The ball-busting Score Attack Mode challenges you to beat all 13 characters in one playthrough. Which wouldn't be such a daunting task, had every character not gone Super Saiyan both in terms of AI difficulty and special buffs. The mechanical Aigis, for instance, gets her limited supply of bullets increased from a manageable 120 to a brutal 999 – good luck dodging those.

As satisfying as the silky smooth animations and even spread of game



ABOVE: It takes a whole lot of class to pull off the catsuit and fur coat look, but somehow Mitsuru manages it.

modes are, *Arena*'s most impressive feature is the underlying fighting system. You have two attack buttons for your character and for their powerful yet fragile Persona. First-time players can tap light attack to unleash a basic Auto Combo, which does modest damage, and then as you learn to set aside the training wheels for something more technically satisfying, the advanced mechanics



offer everything from super jumps and alpha counters to one-hit kills and the extremely flexible Burst system. It works as a combo breaker, combo extender and an instant boost to your super meter.

Discussing the finer points of each mechanic would take more pages than this magazine currently prints, but suffice to say that this is an Arc System game through and through. You'll also find that every character and Persona duo has a refreshingly distinct style. The Katana-wielding Yu can electrocute opponents with the aid of Izanagi; the wannabe-detective Naoto can set up instant kills with the stealthy Sukuna-Hikona (who, incidentally, looks like a Beetleborg in a business suit); and the fabulously rich Mitsuru can freeze enemies with

the icy touch of Artemisia. The only thing you need to be mindful of is the limited number of hits your Persona can take before breaking.

With so many excellent fighting games on the market it can be hard to pick one or two to invest the time with. Many players would casually overlook *Arena* as being a strictly hardcore venture, but the reality is much more open-ended. This game offers a surprisingly accessible fighting system, but one that doesn't skimp on the bottomless depth that the diehard crowd craves. It also does a spectacular job of reworking a traditional J-RPG party into a diverse roster of sluggers. And sure, we've had to wait for the privilege longer than most, but this is one prize fighter that's only going to get better with age. ■

ABOVE: Once your health drops below 35% you'll enter an Awakening state with more powerful supers.

RIGHT: The All-Out Attack is a universal overhead that can lead into a launcher or a knockback.



NETCODE OF HONOUR

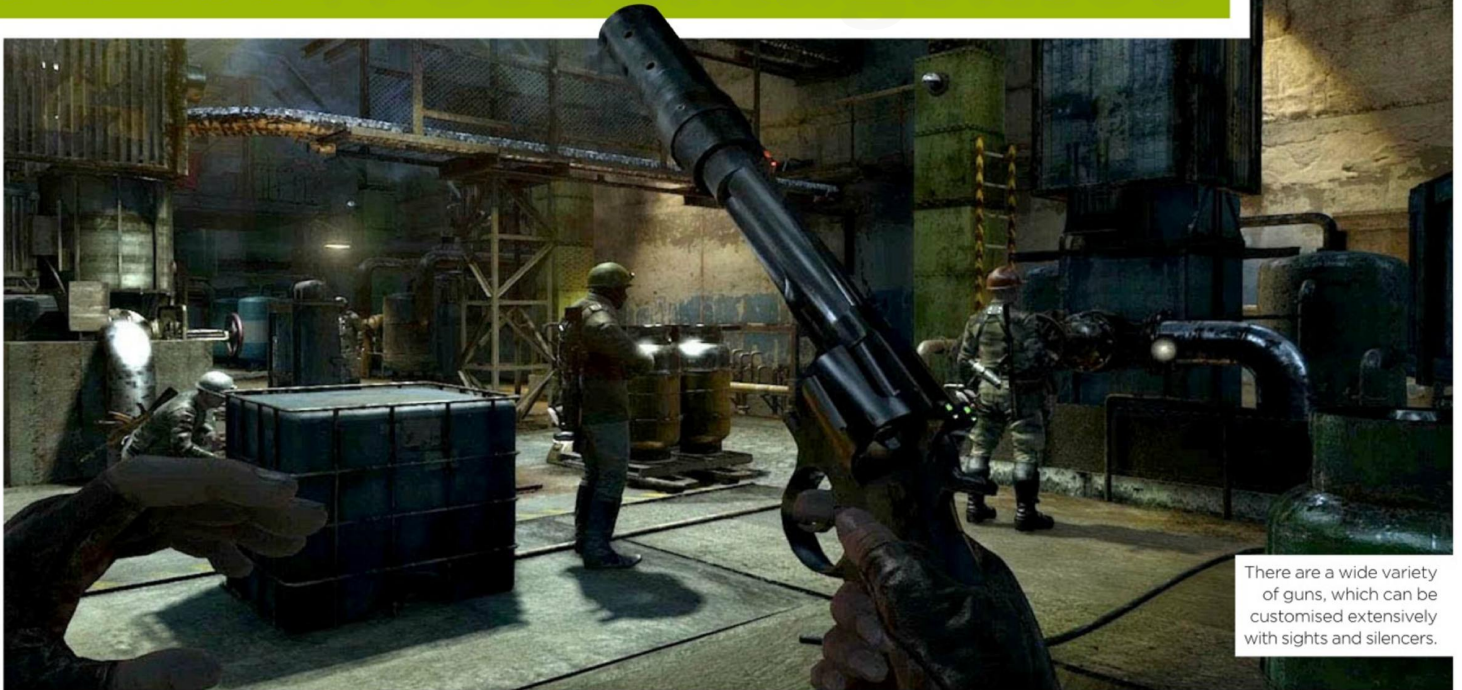
Since the release of the original *BlazBlue*, Arc System has built a solid reputation for its reliable and sturdy netcode. *Arena* stays on track with a spread of online modes that offer a noticeably lag-free fighting experience. Ranked Match caters for those wishing to improve their ranking from the lowly F minus grade to the table-topping Master, while the customisable lobbies enable you to adjust everything from round time and private slots to the range of characters you're looking to play against. Heck, you can even construct a title from 3,000 words that gradually unlock as you play online. We had trouble deciding between "Gigantic Fist of Fun" and "Mega Thrust Dude"...



VERDICT

One question you may find yourself pondering this month is whether to pick up *Injustice: Gods Among Us* or *Persona 4 Arena*. Both are excellent fighting games in their own right, but *Arena* just tips it in the fighting system sweepstakes. It may not have the comic book allure of the caped crusaders and, for many, the *Persona* characters will look like just another anime outing. But it's clear that Arc System is a master of its craft and this is easily its most inviting fighting game to date. The only downside is the detached nature of the Story Mode (something that *Injustice* definitely handles better) but, aside from that, *Arena* is a clean sweep.

METRO: LAST LIGHT



There are a wide variety of guns, which can be customised extensively with sights and silencers.

LAST TRAIN TO MOSCOW



PUBLISHER:
Deep Silver
DEVELOPER:
4A Games
RELEASED:
Out now

AGE:
18 PEGI
PLAYERS:
1

XBOX LIVE:
No

PRICE:
£49.99

www.enterthemetrometro.com

PLUS

- + HUDless gameplay
- + Systemless moral choices
- + Improvements over its predecessor

MINUS

- Not enough new ideas
- Hackneyed plot
- Tedious, overused colour palette

The main expectation with a franchise that failed to reach its potential first time around is that with a second crack at the whip it should address the issues that originally kept it from glory. Like many developers suffering from publisher issues and delays, in this case the collapse of THQ and several months in limbo, 4A Games' *Metro: Last Light* manages to impress us just by getting a release, with Deep Silver stepping in at the last minute.

Unfortunately *Last Light* has more than its share of other obstacles to overcome, in particular the clunky gameplay issues of the original. *Metro 2033* was based on a compelling novel, had excellent graphics and operated under the conceit of being a first-person shooter that eschews the usual handholding, immersing you in the post-apocalyptic world of the Moscow underground. However, its 'realistically' temperamental weapons and dank setting left many gamers expecting more.

The sequel picks up where the last game left off. In fact, there's nothing particularly new here in terms of plot despite input from author Dmitry Glukhovskiy. It's 2034 in *Last Light* (but the story isn't based on the *Metro 2034* book) and Artyom must make contact with a surviving Dark One,



having nuked the rest of the mutant race last time.

Essentially this means making your way (again) through the Moscow Metro system with occasional visits to the surface. Underground dwelling areas have formed, along with allegiances and political groups, a little Venice exists (although not quite the floating city you imagine, more like a floating poo city), the Bolshoi ballet has been reduced to a scabby can-can show and the Nazis and Soviets become tinpot gangs of hoodlums run by sad little men.

This description suggests a wistful decaying beauty; a slow dying end to humanity, sinking into the earth.



BELOW: Mutated animals are extremely hardy and will take a lot of bullets before going down.



ABOVE: The on-rails set-pieces return, but they're a better fit in the cramped corridors of Metro than the spectacle of COD.

Unfortunately this isn't *Fallout* – nothing about Metro ever comes close to really connecting you to the people or their fate. A little boy crying for his teddy leaves you cold at its hackneyed approach, carving out emotional moments with a rusty knife. On two occasions you pick up a companion to share part of your journey, and each is at least interesting and likeable in their own way, but it always hovers on the periphery of your mind that they are there to hold your hand in moments of the game where a HUD or map would otherwise have been needed.

The one aspect of *Metro: Last Light* that really shines through is the lack of guidance. You might think that 4A would simply funnel you through instead of controlling your path, but no; you'll often find yourself in open areas or heavily guarded complexes that require nimble approaches and considered planning. Taking challenges as they come and discovering the lay of the land as you cross it is genuinely very refreshing.

Some games have a 'HUDless' mode for those seeking that kind of immediate experience, but there's always the nagging feeling that you've simply had one hand tied behind your back in a game designed to be played with that information available



to you. In *Metro: Last Light* if you want to know where to go and what to do next, you use your eyes and your feet, try something and simply *find out* what happens – it's very simple but incredibly effective.

Every encounter is exciting and, with a detection indicator on your watch, you're not left entirely rudderless. You may still worry that the game will be relentlessly difficult, with you never getting to feel like a badass, and let's be honest, that's why we play first-person shooters – we don't play them to feel like a useless klutz. The answer is that there aren't that many combat encounters in the game and some can simply be avoided.

It's quite a clever solution to what would otherwise become a slog, but ultimately makes for a less compelling experience. *Metro: Last Light's* gameplay can be summed up as: switch off some lights, hide for a bit, silently knock out three guards, get into a fight with four more guards, leave area, meet an ally, ten minutes of talking, burn through your ammo fighting eight monsters, rinse and repeat. Okay, that might sound like most FPS games, but the pattern isn't cloaked well enough here to keep you invested in the story.

The problem with stealth, and it has always been a problem, is that it can't

RIGHT: Like its predecessor, *Last Light* has its share of "peekaboo" and haunted house-type jumps and scares.

BELOW: You can choose to kill or knock out guards if you use the silent approach.



LAST LIGHT LIMBO

After *Metro 2033* received positive reviews, 4A Games got to work on the sequel with THQ again in place to publish. Unfortunately THQ went under last year after of two decades in business, leaving many of its franchises in limbo including *Saints Row* (see page 24). Deep Silver snapped it up along with *Metro: Last Light* and found itself with a near complete game on its hands.

The 4A Games folks have been quoted as saying that THQ misunderstood the game and that Deep Silver "really gets it". Shame it isn't as good as the original, then.





ever *really* be optional. You can't help but be sceptical every time a studio says, "Hey, we know it's never worked before but we're so much better than every other developer and we've made a game equally appealing to stealthy players and those who will fry every single fool that comes near them." It so rarely happens.

Admittedly you're punished less here for doing your own thing than in the last game, but ultimately if you end up in a firefight you simply miss out on the interesting gameplay on offer and will feel shortchanged on content. On the other hand, there are a tonne of nooks and crannies best avoided if you're trying to invisibly make your way through heavily guarded territory. But who actively tries to avoid interacting with the areas available to explore?

The fuzzy logic continues further, sometimes showing itself in bizarre ways. You might be spending several minutes crouched and methodically making your way behind and past guards. Patiently you'll wait next to a door, listening to guards chatting in a realistic way, gleaning little bits of story from them... and then oops, you're playing an accordion! Yep, you can suddenly find yourself playing randomly placed musical instruments dotted around the environments, rather than carefully unscrewing a nearby light bulb to keep you cloaked in darkness. There's a greed here to try to have the game appeal to every possible player and it just doesn't work – it never does.

Above ground the battles are far more visceral: the mutated creatures that inhabit the crumbling and highly

ABOVE: The lighting and atmosphere are pretty breathtaking, but the palette sure is drab.

BELOW LEFT: *Metro 2033's* nifty flashback sequences make their presence felt again in *Last Light*.



ALONE IN THE DARK

For once we *aren't* happy to hear a developer say that it wanted to focus on producing a compelling single-player experience instead of offering a multiplayer game alongside it. Tacked on, unnecessary multiplayer modes can feel like time wasted that could have been better spent on the actual story. With *Last Light*, however, a real opportunity has been missed to produce a challenging and visceral FPS multiplayer with no maps or HUDs to help you.

MOSCOW MULE



FALLOUT ÷ THE KREMLIN: The heady mix of Moscow's luscious landmarks, an underground world and a nuclear future should produce a more compelling backdrop than it does.





TOP: It takes balls of steel to take on mutants with just a knife, but it's an invaluable way to save precious ammunition.

radiated Moscow are just as tough as their environment. It won't be long till you decide to outrun every monster the game will allow, especially since ammo is at a premium, with military grade rounds actually serving the dual purpose of currency as well as stronger firepower.

These vast, open landscapes with no map and unclear goal markers really test the limits of your patience (though you can fall back on a very rough compass indicator when you become exasperated). A scenario can arise where your gas mask, which is vital on the surface, is out of filters, you're out of medkits, the screen is fogging up with cracks in the glass at the periphery of your vision and you're none the wiser as to where you should be going. Yes it's hardcore, yes it's gritty, but like *Last Light's* predecessor it can feel clunky – and gritty realism sometimes just tumbles downwards into feeling depressing.

The characters, environments and textures are nice and crisp but the theme of damp tunnels, debris and darkness doesn't translate into decaying beauty. Despite glimpses of the Kremlin, Lenin's coffin and an underground Bolshoi theatre, nothing is done to bring the former grandeur of Russia's capital to the visuals – it's all just murky and miserable looking.

ABOVE: Outside and in some underground areas you'll need to wear your gas mask and change filters regularly to stay alive.



The game's colour palette simply doesn't allow for areas to differentiate themselves from one another in an interesting way – and as a result the sense of chapters to the story and transitions from one set-piece to the next are smeared into one long, greyish brown experience.

There are moments of choice in the game but it would undermine its subtlety to describe it as a morality system. Nothing here telegraphs future events; just as you must step into the action without maps or guidance, likewise you can help people and spare enemies harm, but what this might do in terms of branching story or endings isn't even vaguely hinted at. You're not collecting points or ticking boxes but are making decisions for your own reasons.

The degree to which 4A Games has addressed the problems of *Metro 2033* here are typified by the inching along of the plot. There's no real move forward from the last game in terms of time or growth of the character and, likewise, changes in gameplay are grudgingly few. Ammo is a little more plentiful, weapons are more predictable in their handling, but with the exception of the mapless stealth and HUDless combat, there's nothing here to make *Metro: Last Light* stand out from the crowd.

The plot and the setting are just so very overdone. This isn't 2008 when we were complaining about seeing these settings, set-pieces and characterisations repeated over and over; this is five years later when they are so done to death that it's almost embarrassing to be playing through yet another post-apocalyptic, rust-coloured first-person shooter. If we never see another one it will be too soon... well, until *Fallout 4*. ■

VERDICT

Despite some great ideas about bringing more challenging first-person shooting action than we generally see on the Xbox 360, Metro: Last Light just never rises out of the doldrums. For a few moments here and there you feel truly engaged with the world; with no maps or HUD driving you towards your objective, you are able to truly live in the moment. There's not enough of them, though, and the game is mired in a miserable colour palette and frankly played out setting. Despite rising from the ashes after finding a new publisher, Last Light may well be extinguished for good.

6

FAR CRY 3: BLOOD DRAGON



Behold, the titular Blood Dragons – they're angry and stompy and they SHOOT LASERS FROM THEIR EYES.

WELCOME BACK, 1980s! IT'S BIEHN A LONG TIME



PUBLISHER:
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER:
Ubisoft Montreal

RELEASED:
Out now

AGE:
18 PEGI

PLAYERS:
1

XBOX LIVE:
Yes (Leaderboards)

PRICE:
1200 Microsoft Points
www.fc3blooddragon.com

PLUS

- + All the best bits of *Far Cry 3*
- + Epic Power Glove soundtrack
- + Michael F**king Biehn
- + The greatest Eighties homage since *GTA Vice City*

MINUS

- Some weak sauce cut-scenes
- Short and sweet, but still short

Long Tall Sally. Cobra Assault Cannons. 6539X. Ray Jackson's headband. Winners don't use drugs. *You Got The Touch*. Bennett. Training montages. VHS tapes. Alex J Murphy. If you remember those, the chances are pretty good that you were around during the heyday of Eighties action cinema. And the chances are pretty goddamned great that you're going to love the holy hell out of *Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon*.

First things first: despite the name (and common sense), this isn't actually DLC for *Far Cry 3*; *Blood Dragon* is an entirely separate, standalone Live Arcade title. So why put "Far Cry" in the title? Well, it's essentially a reskin of *Far Cry 3* – the same game engine, mechanics, tactics and nickel-slick shooting, but with a coat of neon paint straight out of 1984. It's also a nod to direct-to-video action movie fare like *Bloodsport 4: The Dark Kumite*, which hijack the names of famous franchises while bearing bugger all resemblance to them.

And if you don't "get" why that's funny – if you don't "get" why Michael Biehn is the star of this show, if you don't "get" why he's dressed up like a T-800 and wields an Auto-9, if you don't "get" why the game is set in the future world of 2007 – then *Blood Dragon* is simply not for you.

The game will make absolutely no concessions to you (other than being built on the rock-solid foundations of *Far Cry 3*) and quite frankly doesn't give a shit about you.

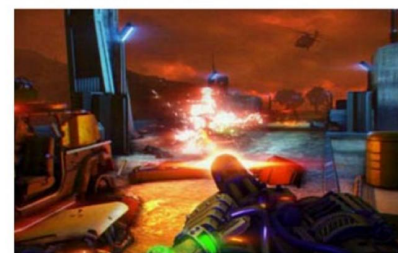
It's a daftly delightful homage to the excesses and incorrectness and just plain naffness of Eighties action movies. Cyborgs are everywhere. Cyborg heroes, cyborg villains, cyber sharks, cyber soldiers... EVERYTHING is a cyborg. Everything is dripping with neon, too; the game may as well be set in the Tech Noir nightclub given the amount of luminescent red and blue that'll melt your retinas. And the music – oh lordy, THE MUSIC! – Power Glove's dreamy synthscapes recall the ethereal eeriness of John Carpenter, Vangelis and Tangerine Dream.

"Okay, that sounds cool," we hear you say, "but that's four paragraphs about the style and nary a word about the substance." You poor, misguided fool – what you fail to realise is that style IS substance. Blasting away with laser guns that are straight out of *V*, blowing the shit out of enemy bases in a helicopter while Little Richard shrieks through your speakers, emptying a minigun into the belly of a giant dragon that shoots death lasers out of its eyes, listening to *Kyle F**king Reese* call bad guys "dickshitters" while cyber music makes you dream of electric sheep...



ABOVE: The *Far Cry 3* bow wasn't futuristic enough for *Blood Dragon*, so Ubisoft slapped some neon shit on it. Works for us.

BOTTOM: Animals like Cyber Panthers are as hazardous to your health as the Cylon knock-offs carrying phased plasma rifles.





ABOVE: "Cobra Assault Cannon – state of the art (knock knock) bang-bang!"



ABOVE: Do like Knife Party does and destroy them with lasers!

Short of building yourself a time machine or actually being Arnold Schwarzenegger, this is the closest you will ever get to experiencing the epitome of explosive sci-fi action extravaganzas first hand. And we already said that it's a neon-coated reskin of *Far Cry 3*, so that right there should be enough "substance" for you. You know how Paul Verhoeven took the Jesus Christ parable and repurposed it into *RoboCop*? This is the exact same deal – quite literally, in a lot of ways.

Like *Far Cry 3*, you've got a giant island to roam freely around. Almost everything is fundamentally the same, too, except for the whole cyborgs and dragons instead of guerrillas and bears thing, and rather than glorious sunshine it's perpetual twilight (think *Blade Runner*). You can still hijack

Jeeps and gunboats, storm outposts (well, "garrisons"), swan off on side-missions and upgrade your character and weapons (though the tattoos and crafting are mercifully replaced with Cyber Points for more straightforward levelling up).

As Rex "Power" Colt, a Mark IV Cyber Commando, you can sprint, dive and fall indefinitely. And by the time you've maxed your stats to "Ultimate Badass" you'll be wielding explosive semi-automatic sniper rifles, quad-barrel shotguns, a wrist-mounted laser that's as powerful as the Death Star, and you'll even ride your own indestructible, rainbow-powered Blood Dragon of death-spewing invincibility.

As you may have gathered from that last line, the plot barely bothers with coherence (and is occasionally overlong and overwritten, falling far flatter than when Biehn simply delivers cheesy one-liners), but you'll be treated to scrappily animated 16-bit cinematics, training montages, sex scenes and more cultural references than you can shake a Frankie Says t-shirt at, while you pursue a crazed cyborg hell-bent on destroying the world with ICBMs.

It's gloriously great and sensationally stupid – and a far cry (go, cheesy gags!) from the main franchise's delusions

of grandeur. The core game lasts about six hours, but like *Far Cry 3* you'll spend way longer than that just titting around between all of the exploring, side-missions and Achievement hunting. Don't listen to the naysayers; this is a throwback to when games didn't care about anything other than delivering pure death on a stick. ■

VERDICT

This is the sort of game that reveals game journalists for who they are. The desperate-to-be-taken-seriously Roger Ebert wannabes lambasted the title for its linearity, insubstantiality and slavish devotion to cultural references. But the actual gamers who simply love games lavished praise on it for doing EXACTLY what everyone wanted: delivering the kind of ludicrous spectacle, cheesy one-liners and VHS-era overindulgence that results in nothing but shit-eating grins. Blood Dragon is to Eighties action movies what Machete is to grindhouse cinema. Somebody at Ubisoft really deserves a job at ICS for giving the audience what they want. It hits the spot!

9

IT WAS ACCEPTABLE THEN



+



FAR CRY 3 + 80s ACTION: It's everything that was awesome about *Far Cry 3*, but with all the pretentious preamble replaced by glorious Eighties action cinema tropes.

INJUSTICE: GODS AMONG US



The Clash system works like a combo breaker where the player with the most meter comes out on top.

LIBERTY AND INJUSTICE FOR ALL...



PUBLISHER:
WB Games
DEVELOPER:
NetherRealm Studios
RELEASED:
Out now
AGE:
16 PEGI
PLAYERS:
1-2
XBOX LIVE:
Yes
PRICE:
£49.99
www.injustice.com

PLUS

- + A surprisingly deep story mode
- + Lots of single-player content
- + Over 20 characters to choose from
- + The satisfyingly flexible systems

MINUS

- Online could've been better
- Biased towards Batman characters

Some people *really* like fighting games. They'll jump straight into practice mode and spend a whole night testing the limits of the system while developing the optimal combos and set-ups for their chosen character. But some folks prefer to tackle fighters on a more casual basis.

They might plough through the story mode a couple of times, perhaps even challenge their friends to a few online bouts, before finally laying the game to rest after exhausting the single-player content. It's clear that both types of gamer exist, so why do fighting games so often cater for one and not the other?

It's not the first title to offer an answer to this tricky conundrum, but *Injustice: Gods Among Us* is one of the most well-rounded fighting games that we have ever played. Much like NetherRealm Studios' work on *Mortal Kombat* before it, *Injustice* offers a seven-hour Story mode that makes most other fighters look positively malnourished.

In his continued madness, The Joker manages to secure a nuclear bomb before linking the detonator to Lois Lane's heart. He then tricks Superman into killing her by making him think that she's Doomsday and, as Metropolis is engulfed in a mushroom cloud, The Man of Steel learns that

Lois was pregnant. Consumed by grief, Superman decides that the nice guy routine has finally run its course – he kills The Joker and creates a new world order where humanity is firmly under his control.

To counter this, Batman recruits superfolk from an alternate dimension, where The Joker's plan failed, and what follows is a surprisingly engaging story where the likes of Nightwing, Catwoman and the Green Arrow duke it out in a DC battle royale. And just in case 50 fights woven between a steady flow of cinematic cut-scenes wasn't enough, *Injustice* offers solo players further mileage courtesy of the STAR Labs mode and its outlay of 240 missions – they even have two secondary objectives each.

As generous as the single-player content is, a fighting game cannot live by modes alone; it also needs a system that amplifies the combative personalities of each character. And thankfully, *Injustice* does an excellent job of evolving the established *Mortal Kombat* framework into something more competitive. The block button has been replaced by holding back, Street Fighter-style, and players keep whatever health they had remaining between rounds.

This is a very ballsy move when you consider today's trend for comeback



ABOVE: When your opponent's back is against the wall it's possible to smash them into the next area.

mechanics like X-Factor and Rage, but it means epic last-minute retaliations are now earned more through crafty play than system intervention. What really sets *Injustice* apart, however, are the Trait and Interactive Object systems. The Trait functions similarly to *BlazBlue*'s Drive system by giving each character a unique ability at the touch of a button.

These range from The Joker parrying attacks and Wonder Woman switching between her sword and whip stances, to Harley Quinn pulling out random items and Solomon Grundy chaining throws together. The Interactive Objects, meanwhile, are items that sit in a stage's foreground. A power character like Superman can throw a car for a good chunk of damage while an agile character like Catwoman has the ability to manoeuvre a turret so that it targets her opponent.



There were fears that the Objects would cheapen the purity of the one-on-one combat, but this isn't the case. If anything, the interactive stages add an extra dimension to player strategy. Of far greater concern is the online stability; we wouldn't go so far as to say that the netcode is poor, but the ranked matches and private lobbies fall short of the smoothness offered by *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* and *BlazBlue*. At its worst, the input lag makes zoning characters a nightmare to deal with – particularly the dual pistols of Deathstroke, falling rocks of Sinestro and the ghostly grabs of Raven – but when the stars finally do align, a perfectly stable match is more than possible.

Taken as a package, *Injustice* succeeds because it offers different things for different players. Comic book fans will appreciate the attention to detail that has gone into every Batarang and Power Ring. Arcade stick owners will unravel the depths of the intriguing fighting system while learning the intricacies of the 24 characters. And last but certainly not least, casual players will discover a story that pits The Man of Steel's mettle against The Dark Knight's resolve. If you're not into fighting games then *Injustice* is unlikely to change your mind, but if you have even a passing fascination then this DC slugfest is one purchase that's easy to justify. ■

RIGHT: Catwoman is proof that you can be a crazy cat lady while still maintaining a lucrative profession.



BELOW: There's a healthy dose of DLC for the game, including the cult favourite Lobo as a playable character.



VERDICT

We're not going to tell you that Injustice is mechanically more sophisticated than Super Street Fighter IV or The King of Fighters XIII – that would be an outright lie. But in terms of all the Western-developed fighting games we've played, NetherRealm isn't far off bridging the gap between the Eastern competition. It also understands that most players won't be satisfied with finely crafted mechanics and little else – there needs to be more substance and this is what Injustice delivers in spades.

8

DEAD ISLAND RIPTIDE



TOO BAD YOU CAN'T DROWN THE DEAD ANYMORE



PUBLISHER:
Deep Silver

DEVELOPER:
Techland

RELEASED:
Out Now

AGE:
18 PEGI

PLAYERS:
1-4

XBOX LIVE:
Yes

PRICE:
£49.99

www.deadisland.deepsilver.com

PLUS

- + Hilarious fun with co-op
- + Better single-player than Borderlands
- + Zombie bisection is still awesome
- + Preparing for assaults

MINUS

- Slowdown when fighting in water
- Older issues remain unremedied

Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink – but there's still a diet based exclusively on heavily caffeinated fluids, fruits and snacks wrapped in plastic to consume in this sequel-that's-not-a-sequel (at least not in the traditional sense).

Want some more co-op, open-world, action-RPG zombie-slaying of a style and tone strikingly similar to what came before, but with some subtle alterations that are on occasion quite obvious, yet hardly manage to shift anything seismically? Then step forward as your favourite feast of flesh has returned, confident enough to continue much as it left off.

Make no bones about it: *Riptide* exists because Techland felt it had more to say using many of the same elements it had already created. Beginning with a recap of the events of the original, there's no rap-based intro and the initial feel is reminiscent of watching a swiftly constructed second series of a show that could have been concluded if not for a fanbase eager for more. It's *Dead Island*, then – again.

This new island is still one of the tropical variety and controls still have an ever-so slightly fudgy response. Luggage featuring respawning cash, and the ability to retrieve belts and engine parts from within a computer

that should by rights be filled with printed circuit boards and silicon, still don't make a lick of sense, but there are indeed differences and all mostly for the better.

In comes a weather system that seemingly turns on and off, with perfectly clear skies one moment and a torrential downpour the next. The resultant river-based highway must be navigated in a boat that, once found, repeats itself across the map with the regularity of the previous game's utility vehicles. Then there are missions in which you must defend areas against the ravenous hordes.

There are also new skills to learn and, on occasion, be amused by. Our Xian, for example, can use her dainty red shoes to crush the skulls of the infected who have been knocked to the floor. Not just while near them, you understand; she can perform a drop attack from any height, no matter how slight. Should Xian be just a tad higher up an incline than a reasonably far off and targeted adversary, she's able to leap forward with unusual ease, for an impossible distance. It's quite unnatural, but still pretty damned amusing.

The problem inherent in all the familiarity, of course, is pre-existing understanding of these similar surroundings and their psychotic



ABOVE: You can bring your existing character across to the new game, but levelling up is still a swift affair.

inhabitants. There's no shock factor invoked by the discovery of shambling corpses or (to veterans, at least) any real concern about how to deal with them, while the shrieks and growls you hear are clearly nothing to be concerned about.

Why risk the potential pain of engaging in combat when you can easily circumnavigate the threat if you're just passing through? Why feel threatened when you already know that your ability to kick danger to safe distance is your greatest friend? This said, there are still new threats to discover including zombies that can perform ranged attacks either with vomit, by tearing off their own meat to act as a projectile or, more alarmingly, ones that can be as effective at hurling



Failing a mission because a hapless NPC died is fantastic. Said no-one ever.

blades as you are. These particular bastards can wipe out your health with one well-placed chuck, meaning you can descend a ladder assuming that all is safe, only to become deceased without being able to reason why. Expect to make exclamations of the WTF variety.

Breaking up the same-old, same-old are missions where preparations must be made to counter an imminent assault in sections that would be told via montage had *Riptide* been a movie. Yay, real newness! Considering that the island is resplendent with foliage as solid as granite, it's surprising how easily metal fences can be destroyed once placed in doorways – you really would be better off laying a hedge. These fences can't be repaired and

must be replaced, but can at least be electrified and protected by mines and miniguns that can be installed in set places – though limited levels of ammunition don't make them a one-stop solution.

Gas canisters can also be moved and shot to cause maximum damage, and can even be placed near sonic devices that attract your enemies and make them prime for mass slaughter. All in all this new focus on a siege mentality is welcome; it's just a shame that Call of Duty does it better as a sideline. Still, Dead Island is back mostly doing what it's beloved for and, whether you play as a lone wolf or as part of a quartet, you're in for another slightly shonky yet considerably pleasurable time. ■

RIGHT: Dammit – they've just about puked themselves to death already, thanks to our marvellous poisoned knives.



BELOW: You'll have several other NPCs in your camp that need protection and offer up secondary missions and rewards.



ARCS OF FIRE

With but two guns to defend four sides of what will become a safehouse, it's going to be someone's job to move them to other locations when required – that is, of course, as long as there's any ammo left.

Carrying heavy guns brings a penalty to your movement speed because they're heavy, right? Right. But that doesn't explain why they can be hurled so far. Indeed, chucking massive guns around makes shifting their position a great deal faster... it just looks weird when performed by a slight Chinese lady.

Such job allocation is not only vital for co-op play but it really does add to the panic considerably, especially when fences get torn and the dead are within the breached walls.



VERDICT

Casually munching on an apple and looting the immediate area while a nearby survivor begs for assistance is still coldly amusing as ever. It's quite trite to mention that if you enjoyed Dead Island you'll dig Riptide, but it happens to be true. The ability for co-op players to go off on sub-missions individually (and even with each other) provides a welcome blend of solidarity and individualist acts, working together to defend locations provides fresh fun, while running zombies over in a boat simply never gets dull. It would just have been sweeter if the old game's screws had been tightened before it was expanded.

8

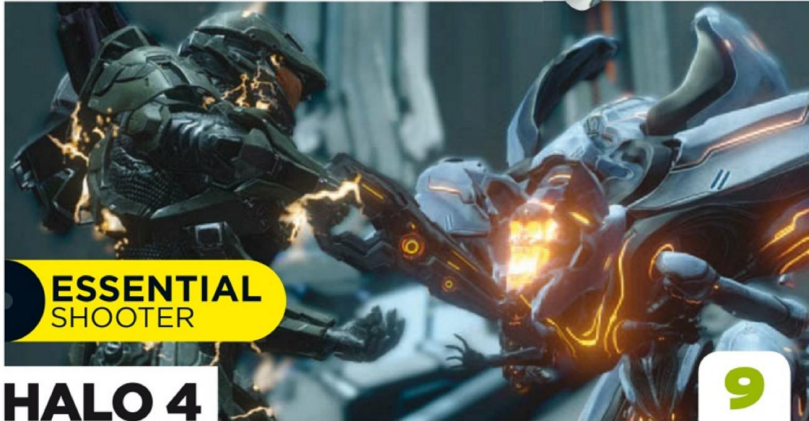
BUYERS' GUIDE

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO XBOX 360 GAMING!

Here's all of our recent reviews, a selection of genre must-haves and some bargain bucket classics...



PUBLISHER:
Microsoft Studios
DEVELOPER:
343 Industries
RELEASED:
06 November 2012



ESSENTIAL SHOOTER

HALO 4

It's been said a million times already, but without Halo there wouldn't be an Xbox 360. What's more miraculous, however, is not that one game saved a console, but that it spawned a series that has never hit a duff note. The assumption was that this winning streak was down to Bungie's guidance and, although this may be entirely true, the series continues to achieve the seemingly impossible in the hands of 343. The campaign is engagingly epic, the online multiplayer is thought-provokingly balanced and the many optional extras add innumerable hours to an already stacked offering.

Indeed, perhaps *Halo 4*'s greatest success is how much content it offers. It's no surprise that the game comes on two discs, as when you factor in the five initial chapters of Spartan Ops, the eight Campaign missions, the ten multiplayer maps, the thirty-odd weapons and the bottomless flexibility of the improved Forge mode, it's fair to say that 343 hasn't cut any corners. It doesn't reinvent the FPS genre but *Halo 4* manages to build upon the foundations of its predecessors with a number of genuinely solid improvements; if this is a first attempt, we really can't wait for *Halo 5*...

LET'S BE SERIOUS

Come get Sam!

You know what's tough? Facing wave after wave of invading alien scumbags across a variety of environments where you can't duck behind cover and recharge your life force. Even on Normal difficulty. Well buckle up and get a helmet (or any number of other pieces of armour lying about the place), because old-school rules are back once again to prove that modern warfare is indeed for pussies. *Serious Sam 3: BFE* is a slick killer of a mad-



assed shoot-'em-up that just wants you to enjoy employing proper arcade skills in 3D locations – and jolly tasty it is, too. They don't normally make 'em like this any more.

ALSO WORTH A PUNT...

BioShock.....	10
Bulletstorm.....	9
Max Payne 3.....	9
Vanquish.....	9
Spec Ops: The Line.....	8



AND THE REST...

9

Battlefield 3

EA / EA DICE
28 October 2011

As an online experience it's phenomenal. As an overall FPS package? It loses a point for aping the worst of the opposition and laying a single-player turd on an otherwise pristine multiplayer carpet.

9

Borderlands 2

2K Games / Gearbox Software
21 September 2012

Borderlands 2 is exactly what fans will want and expect, and provides a heck of a lot of content for four players to share as they terrorise a planet for reasons that don't really matter as much as the fun that's being had.

8

Call of Duty: Black Ops II

Activision / Treyarch
12 November 2012

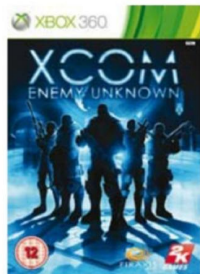
Black Ops II is neither a big step forward nor a by-the-numbers update; it's a methodical refinement that stays true to its heritage while offering more freedom and new ways to play, be it singularly, competitively or cooperatively.

9

Far Cry 3

Ubisoft / Ubisoft Montreal
30 November 2012

It's like all the good stuff Ubi learned over the years rolled into one epic game. Sure it's about shooting, but it's also about exploration and has quite a few Indy/Lara moments. Get it if you ever liked a John McTiernan movie.



PUBLISHER:
2K Games

DEVELOPER:
Firaxis Games

RELEASED:
12 October 2012



XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

When we play turn-based games we don't expect to feel intestines tighten and throats thicken. *XCOM* offers plenty of time to ponder actions, but nearly every single one has an overall significance that can affect the entire planet, so a shot is never fired without eyes staring wide-open and unflinchingly at the screen – especially when it is framed in hauntingly slow-motion.

At *Enemy Unknown's* core is not only the greatest tactics game on the console, it's one of the finest ever made. It's damned polished, terrifyingly consuming, tactically rewarding and utterly engrossing throughout. Every Xboxer should give this title their time and attention, even if strategy games aren't typically their cup of tea. Seriously, it deserves it. It's right up there in Game of the Year contention.

ALSO WORTH A PUNT...

Anomaly: Warzone Earth.....	8
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3.....	8
R.U.S.E.....	8
Supreme Commander II.....	8
Tropico 4.....	8



PUBLISHER:
Bethesda Softworks

DEVELOPER:
Arkane Studios

RELEASED:
12 October 2012



DISHONORED

Better than *Deus Ex*? We would say so, yes. Better than *BioShock*? It's not quite that sort of game and, although deeply textured, it doesn't quite have the same level of political personality or attempt at greater meaning – though it certainly does greater things with stealth and death.

Arkane Studios has defiantly crafted something pretty damned involving that's so breathlessly executed that it begs to be completed – and not just once. It's hard to find faults that aren't easily forgivable. *Dishonored* is sneaking, sword-swinging, super-powered steampunk brilliance.

ALSO WORTH A PUNT...

Bayonetta.....	9
Catherine.....	8
Midway Arcade Origins.....	8
Mirror's Edge.....	7
Asura's Wrath.....	6



CHEAP THRILLS

People always complain that games are too expensive, and they're not wrong. While you can usually get new releases for less than the £49.99 RRP, if you delve a little deeper into the www.shopto.net bucket, you can get yourself two or even three times as many games for the same chunk of change...

Devil May Cry HD Collection

Price: £13.85

What we have here is, for the most part, not HD at all but merely HD-compatible. Many elements still feature 4:3 ratio screens and it's actually possible to count the pixels that make up letters of text. But despite some ugliness there's still a lot of beauty still to be enjoyed with this compilation – if you're looking for a history lesson then here's where you really ought to be.



Fable II (Classics)

Price: £6.85

Oh, Fable, how much more loved you surely would have been were it not for the Peter Molyneux-shaped albatross hanging around your neck. It's all-too easy to pick apart due to hubris alone but, if you can detach yourself from all the bullshit, you will almost certainly have a great time. And if you can only pick one instalment, the second chapter for under seven quid is a bargain.



Need For Speed The Run

Price: £9.85

There is a genuinely great racing game hidden away in *The Run* somewhere, with some dazzling visuals and impressive on-track action. However, all the good work is overshadowed by some rather curious design decisions that threaten to undermine the fun of taking a supercar on a 200mph road trip across America. For less than a tenner, though, it's worth the gamble.



Resident Evil 6

Price: £16.85

If you take it for what it is – an attempt to turn Resident Evil into a more shooter-oriented and cinematic experience – you'll be able to look past the survival-horror that could've been and enjoy all the *survival-action* on offer. You'll still have to punch a few moths and pilot a plane, but finding and firing the rocket launcher is still as fun and satisfying as it ever was.



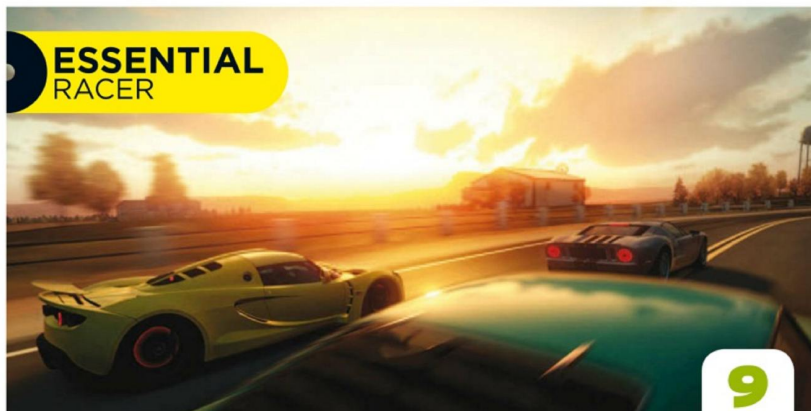
PRICES ARE CORRECT AT THE
TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

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PUBLISHER:
Microsoft Studios
DEVELOPER:
Playground Games /
Turn 10
RELEASED:
26 October 2012



FORZA HORIZON

While it's easy to label *Horizon* as an arcade diversion for Turn 10's illustrious racer, another *Need for Speed* wannabe that drags terms like 'high-octane' to the fore, it's probably better to explain what *isn't* in the game. There are no cinematic takedowns, no ridiculously big jumps through billboards, no drift events, no cops and there's precious little in the way of hidden routes and shortcuts.

This is still very much a *Forza* title – and that means pure, simple and slick racing. That's not to say that the series hasn't let its hair down, though, with plenty of incentives to have some fun

with the bounty of cars on offer – and the whole festival vibe, coupled with a great soundtrack (split into three cool radio channels, complete with fun feedback on the action) certainly adds to the party atmosphere.

There are skill points for extreme driving and plenty more collectibles and extra rewards on offer to inspire exploration of this free-roaming Colorado backdrop, but the car still remains very much the star over any glorified Hollywood nonsense. It may just be a spin-off for now, but we suspect that Turn 10 has itself another winning franchise.

KARTY PARTY

Can anyone beat the plumber?

Super-realistic simulations and fireworks-filled arcade racers are all well and good, but sometimes you simply can't beat a good ol' fashioned kart racer. We're still a little shy of the

mark set by the mighty Mario Kart franchise, but there are some serious contenders on the 360.

Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed (see right) and *Joy Ride Turbo* (the Live Arcade version, not the Kinect mess) lead the pack, with the slick but disappointing *F1 Race Stars* and low-budget *Jimmie Johnson's Anything with an Engine* (a US title) rolling in behind them.

If you're not too worried about gameplay depth, there are plenty of options for younger gamers as well. *Dreamworks Super Star Kartz* and *Ben 10: Galactic Racing* are sure to keep the little ones more than happy, and they're fun for adults to join in too.



ALSO WORTH A PUNT...

Forza Motorsport 4.....	9
DiRT 3.....	8
Driver San Francisco.....	8
Test Drive Unlimited 2.....	8
WRC FIA World Rally Championship 2....	8



AND THE REST...



Daytona USA
Sega / Sega
26 October 2011

After years of bad ports on underappreciated consoles, Sega has bestowed its fans with a game that strikes a perfect balance between authenticity and improvement. Finally, the conversion *Daytona* deserves.



F1 2012
Codemasters / Codemasters Racing Studio
21 September 2012

Once again Codemasters has shown itself to be at the very top of the realistic racing tree, recreating both the mechanics and the atmosphere of the world's favourite driving challenge superbly.



Need for Speed Most Wanted
EA / Criterion Games
02 November 2012

Criterion has crafted what can really only be described as the arcade racer of the year. It's unlikely that we'll bear witness to anything as good as *Most Wanted* until developers hit their stride on the next wave of consoles.



Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed
Sega / Sumo Digital
16 October 2012

There's the temptation to brand it as a "kid's game" but, if you invest the time into learning the technical nuances of each lovingly detailed track, it offers one of the most fundamentally fun experiences of the year.



PUBLISHER:
2K Sports

DEVELOPER:
Visual Concepts

RELEASED:
05 October 2012



NBA 2K13

It was inevitable that, after putting Michael Jordan in *2K11* and all of history's greatest NBA teams and legends in *2K12*, *NBA 2K13* would have a hard time topping its predecessors. Sadly the addition of the 1992 Dream Team and the 2012 Team USA can't possibly make up for the loss of the Jordan Challenge and NBA's Greatest modes, making this year's game feel a little lacking compared to previous years' outings.

However, even though it's 2K's fault for spoiling our appetite, this is just a case of us being greedy and grumpy

because there's one less dish on the banquet table. When you look at the quality of the dishes that are on offer, you'll find that they're richer, tastier and made with the greatest ingredients that the series has ever served.

What *NBA 2K13* lacks in a signature mode, it more than makes up for in a revamped interface that adds a layer of depth, control and tactility we'd never thought possible. It comes at the price of being very hard to get used to, and incredibly complicated, but once you do... wow. We never knew that sports simulations could be this authentic.

ESSENTIAL
SPORT

8



PUBLISHER:
Square Enix

DEVELOPER:
United Front Games

RELEASED:
17 August 2012



SLEEPING DOGS

Well done to Square Enix for rescuing *Sleeping Dogs* from the doldrums, as this is a fine example of the open-world genre filled with action and drama. United Front has pulled together the best parts of the games it admires, tweaked them, made them its own and then stuck them all back together under a Hong Kong moon. The blockbuster hit of the summer, no doubt.

So many open-world games nail the atmosphere and tone, but fail in that most fundamental of areas – fun.

Sleeping Dogs certainly does not. Tonally, it's all over the place but none of this matters when you're flying down the road on a sports bike, blasting armoured cars with an Uzi before leaping off a bridge, dismounting and then beating the ever-loving crap out of a group of hoodlums.

The next real leap in open-world gaming won't happen until *GTA V* but, as an example of how to do the genre right, this deserves much praise and success. It's just that kind of guy.

ESSENTIAL
ADVENTURE

8

AND THE REST...



FIFA 13
EA Sports / EA Canada
28 September 2012

For us, *FIFA 13* is the best football game out there. PES veterans may prefer the return to form of *PES 2013*, but in terms of overall gameplay, presentation and sheer wealth of options, *FIFA* takes the title on goal difference.



NHL 13
EA Sports / EA Canada
14 September 2012

NHL 13 is one of the finest sports games ever made. Even if you're not an NHL aficionado, this is still a superbly compelling, frantic and thrilling multiplayer game that deserves real recognition the whole world over.



The Bigs 2
2K Sports / Blue Castle Games
17 July '09

Real baseball is juiced to the gills on steroids and is still less exciting than grandma's tits. Thankfully this is the *NBA Jam* of baseball games, bearing little resemblance to the sport – as the awesome Home Run Pinball will attest.



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13
EA Sports / EA Tiburon
30 March 2012

Extended online options offer plenty of Live potential, while the Tiger Legacy Mode takes you through every step of Eldrick's illustrious career. Forget the Kinect faffery and this is still a sublime slice of golfing joy.

ALSO WORTH A PUNT...

Grand Theft Auto IV 10
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim 9
L.A. Noire 9
Mass Effect 3 9
Red Dead Redemption 9



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PUBLISHER:
Namco Bandai
DEVELOPER:
Namco Bandai
RELEASED:
14 September 2012



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

Has Tekken always been this funny? We've been signed up to the King of Iron Fist tourney since it first burst onto the PSone back in 1995, and it has always been a fantastical and spectacular series. Playing *Tekken Tag Tournament 2*, though, makes it feel like the whole thing's been played for laughs for nearly two decades. And even if it wasn't always this way, one thing's for sure now – Tekken is here to make you smile.

If you can keep a straight face while a dinosaur in a wizard's hat attacks you with a fish, there's something wrong with you and you need to seek medical

attention immediately. There's barely a minute that goes by in this quick-fire, two-on-two Tekken 'greatest hits' without something cracking you up, be it a daft background, some thumping gabba house music or a ludicrous custom costume.

In a genre that sometimes takes itself too seriously (or the players do, in any case) it's refreshing to see Tekken just let loose and have some fun. It's still technical, it's still tight, but now it feels like it's in it for the yucks, like an ageing fighter who's no longer in the hunt for championship gold but is eager to entertain the fans.

MANUFACTURER:
TP-Link
PRICE:
£59.99

RELEASED:
29 November 2012

TP-LINK AV500+ POWERLINE ADAPTOR

Wireless internet is great when you're using your iPad in the kitchen or on the loo, but on the 360 where you can plug in an ethernet cable? It's daft. Not only does Wi-Fi literally *halve* your internet speed (and it's usually waaay worse than that), bandwidth-intensive applications like online gaming or just streaming movies will leave your Xbox buffering and stuttering.

Most people are stuck using Wi-Fi because their modem is in a different room from their console, so they can't get a wired connection without cables trailing everywhere. But those days are over! With the TP-Link AV500+ Powerline Adaptor (model TL-PA551), you can now enjoy a full-speed wired connection in any room where there's a power socket.

The AV500+ uses your home's own electrical wiring to create a network. Simply plug one Adaptor into a socket next to your modem (and this model has an AC pass-through, so you can slap your modem's power plug right into it), connect an ethernet lead and bam – your house is one giant, wired internet router!



ESSENTIAL PERIPHERAL

Plug another Adaptor (you get two in this Starter Kit) into a power socket anywhere else on the same electrical circuit and enjoy the same rock-solid, high-speed connection as if you had plugged your console directly into the back of your modem. Speeds of up to 500Mbps easily support online gaming and multiple HD streams, and a button press instantly gives you 128-bit AES encryption, too.

If you do *anything* on the internet, these are absolutely invaluable. Our highest possible recommendation!



AND THE REST...



8
Battle Fantasia
505 Games / Arc System Works
06 March 2009

A sublime blend of the old and the new, *Battle Fantasia* has both the mechanics and depth to attract devout beat-'em-up fanatics and the style, polish and approachability to rope in the less devoted gamer.



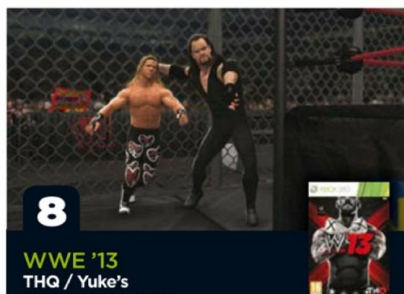
8
Dead or Alive 5
Tecmo Koei / Team Ninja
28 September 2012

DOA 5 is as jiggy as ever, but there's finally enough depth to the gameplay to make it a worthy rival to the other fighters on the market – especially with the all-star trio from Virtua Fighter making their presence felt.



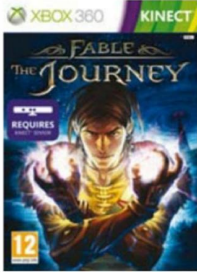
8
Ultimate Marvel Vs. Capcom 3
Capcom / Capcom / 18 November 2011

Ultimate is more than just a run of the mill MOT of *Fate of Two Worlds*; it's a full-blown tune-up with engine upgrades, fancy hydraulics and a swanky new body kit. This is no less than ultimate by name and ultimate by nature.



8
WWE '13
THQ / Yuke's
02 November 2012

WWE '13 is a bloody good grappler that any wrestling fan will appreciate and anyone who lived through the Attitude Era will adore. But, like a four-star Shawn Michaels match, it also comes with a little heartbreak, kid.



PUBLISHER:
Microsoft Studios
DEVELOPER:
Lionhead Studios
RELEASED:
12 October 2012



FABLE: THE JOURNEY

8

For the most part, *Fable: The Journey* is a roaring success. A testament to the technology that Microsoft has put so much faith in and a worthy side dish to one of its most popular franchises, and there are good times aplenty to be found once you've popped the disc in the tray.

It contains the same picturesque world of Albion, has the same degree of very British humour, has a storyline that tells an immersive tale of one young man's rise from a frightened rookie to a badass world-saver and it's an experience that we enjoyed as

much as we have any other Kinect game out there.

It's simple but empowering and blasting hordes of Hobbes with the power of your hands is a surprising pleasure. It's no *Fable IV*, that's for sure, but it still offers a rich and rewarding experience - and if only the persistent flaws in Kinect's technology could be ironed out, it would be an almost perfect padless title. But still, if you're even slightly intrigued, it's definitely worth a weekend rental as it's one of the finest examples yet of what Kinect could be capable of.



PUBLISHER:
D3 Publisher
DEVELOPER:
Tamsoft
RELEASED:
19 January 2012



ONECHAMBARA Z: KAGURA (JAPAN)

The original *Onechanbara* was a misunderstood gem. Just as people didn't 'get' that *Deadly Premonition* was an ode to *Twin Peaks*, they didn't 'get' that *Bikini Samurai Squad* was a love letter to fans of chop-socky and chanbara (Japanese swordfighting) movies. Fans of Asian action cinema loved the hilariously gratuitous action and the low-budget production, while others just saw an exploitative game that wasn't very good.

Well, if you hated the last one then stop reading now - *Onechanbara Z* is more of the same (albeit with a new romanisation). The same daft story and characters. The same overdose of boobs and blood. The same mindless yet strangely satisfying gameplay. Only now the volume is cranked way up to 11, there are more boss fights and, yes, there is a schoolgirl with a chainsaw. Indeed, if you love *Lollipop Chainsaw*, this one's probably for you.

AND THE REST...



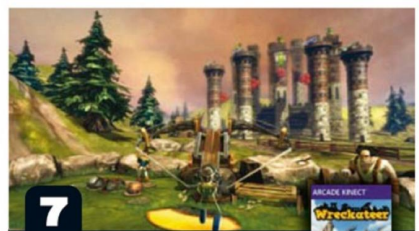
Dance Central 3
Microsoft Studios / Harmonix/
Backbone Entertainment
02 November 2012

Right here, right now, *Dance Central 3* really is the best Kinect title out there. It's a brilliant party game for the casual crowd and a more than worthy evolution of the franchise for the hardcore followers.



Kinect Sports: Season Two
Microsoft Game Studios /
Rare/BigPark / 28 October 2011

With crowd-pleasers like baseball, golf and basketball, plus the sleeper sensation that is darts, coupled with voice navigation and Xbox Live support, this is Kinect's best non-dance party game.



Wreckateer
Microsoft Studios / Iron Galaxy
25 July 2012

Microsoft waited to cash in on the Angry Birds phenomenon and this is the result - easy enough for any old mug to play, but with enough going on that us 'hardcore' lot don't immediately start looking for joypads.



Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2012
Ubisoft / Ubisoft Montreal
11 November 2011

Fittingly, it's an evolution on the original game, rather than an all-new singing and dancing sequel. Still a great workout tool for all fitness levels - and still one of the best showcases of the Kinect technology.

ALSO WORTH A PUNT...

Darkest of Days..... USA
Gal Gun Japan
Jurassic Park: The Game USA
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise Japan
NCAA Football 13 USA



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PUBLISHER:
Microsoft Studios
DEVELOPER:
4J Studios / Mojang
RELEASED:
09 May 2012



MINECRAFT: XBOX 360 EDITION

Given that the PC version took the world by storm, it's impossible to not to make comparisons when building a brave new blocky world on the 360. Fortunately the changes to the Xbox edition are subtle, clever and, most importantly, leave us just as lost in the wilderness as on the PC.

Minecraft remains a game about survival. It may sound obtuse, but it's about mining and crafting – it is not, in the first instance, about building awesome structures and weapons. Make yourself some torches, forge a

decent pickaxe and then dig a mine. Dig for coal, iron, gold, diamond... collect them and craft better tools, then keep digging. And above all, stay alive when night falls.

While those who have already been creating myriad worlds on the PC may find the 360 version too simplistic, newcomers will be quickly caught up in the magic. It's a great port and, with a few DLC additions, could see a whole new community of rabid Minecrafters rise up to take over the randomly generated world.

8



PUBLISHER:
MTV Games
DEVELOPER:
Harmonix
RELEASED:
29 October 2010



ROCK BAND 3

While *Black Ops* sold 1.4 million units in 24 hours in the UK, *Rock Band 3* only scraped a paltry 7,400 sales in twice that time. It's sad that the collapse of the music game genre turned the *real* best sequel of 2010 into a reason for Viacom to put Harmonix on the chopping block. Make no mistake, though – if you've ever had even the slightest inclination to pick up a plastic guitar, this is one purchase you simply have to make.

We'll admit that the Pro modes and instruments were better ideas on paper than in practice, and trying to use two guitars and a keyboard results in a semi-broken experience. But with vocal harmonies, all-new keyboard and piano parts, support for up to seven players and the ability to import all non-Beatles DLC and tracks, there's nothing to say except that this is the ultimate music game. Sadly, it also seems to be the ultimate "proper" Rock Band.

9

ALSO WORTH A PUNT...

DJ Hero.....	9
Guitar Hero World Tour.....	9
Rez HD.....	9
Def Jam Rapstar.....	8
Rocksmith.....	8



AND THE REST...



Bastion

Warner Bros Interactive / Supergiant Games / 20 July 2011

Yes it looks like basic hack-and-slash, but it's soon apparent that there are some complex RPG-style shenanigans going on behind those pretty, hand-drawn visuals. The best game in 2011's Summer of Arcade.



Exit 2

Taito / Taito
22 April 2009

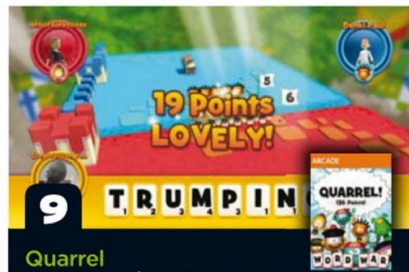
Play it for five minutes and you might mistake it for a plodding knock-off of *Prince of Persia '89*. Play it for longer and you'll see *Exit 2* for the brilliantly brain-melting puzzle-platformer that it truly is.



I Am Alive

Ubisoft / Ubisoft Shanghai
07 March 2012

As bleak as it is brilliant, it's linear yet open enough for you to explore, but at its heart it is a wrenchingly tense and tough experience, all about surviving by whatever means you can. One that you absolutely must play.



Quarrel

UTV Ignition / Denki Entertainment
25 January 2012

There's very little chance of *Quarrel's* hybrid gameplay converting anyone without a taste for cerebral action, but a great game is a great game regardless of genre. And this fits the bill perfectly thanks to its clever mix of concepts.



The latest reviews from the pages of 360 Gamer

Shooter Racer Adventure Sport Action Alternative Strategy Fighter Platformer Kinect Puzzle

TITLE	PUBLISHER	SUMMARY	ISSUE REVIEWED	SCORE
Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	"It manages to get so much right, but its greatest flaw is revealed when the action kicks in."	124	7
Anarchy Reigns	Sega	"Unashamedly a gamer's game. Sure it's scrappy in spots, but it's got the kind of heart and depth that we've long been calling out for."	123	8
Army of Two: The Devil's Cartel	EA	"The Devil's Cartel is not a terrible game, nor is it a very good one - it's just an exercise in mediocrity from start to finish."	127	5
BioShock Infinite	2K Games	"In parts it's like a piece of interactive adult literature, but it's still a game where blowing heads off can be mightily satisfying."	126	9
Black Knight Sword	Digital Reality	"It's surreal and refreshingly different. But in terms of the all-important gameplay, it's a competent if unremarkable adventure."	123	6
Crysis 3	EA	"Is an absolute blast, right up until it falls apart during the finale."	125	7
Dead Space 3	EA	"It's less horrifying than the prior games, but the fact that its co-op is arguably better than the solo alternative is dead impressive."	124	8
DmC Devil May Cry	Capcom	"It's fair to say that Bayonetta developer PlatinumGames has got itself some stiff competition."	123	9
Fist of the North Star: Ken's Rage 2	Tecmo Koei	"As a Fist of the North Star game it's as imperfect as the first one, but as a Warriors-style brawler it's definitely more enjoyable."	124	7
Gears of War: Judgment	Microsoft Games	"We'd have liked a meatier campaign and a smattering of spectacle, but especially online this is still the beast we know and love."	126	8
History: Legends of War	PQube	"The real horror of war is that Legends very nearly succeeds but is ultimately let down by a succession of clumsy errors."	126	6
Hitman: HD Trilogy	Square Enix	"Welcome though they are, the HD improvements are not perfect. That said, we're glad that this restoration exists."	124	7
Kinect Party	Microsoft Studios	"It supports six players and even recognises your pets. The first game ever that you can play with your dog - what more do you want?"	123	8
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	Namco Bandai	"CyberConnect2 once again proves that, when it comes to adapting anime into videogames, it's got some serious ninja skills."	126	8
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	Tecmo Koei	"This is a welcome attempt to address issues, yet it's woefully obvious that one key element remains elusive: actual pleasure."	127	6
Omerta - City of Gangsters	Kalypso	"It's been made on a budget while being sold at a premium price, but Omerta is a cracking little crime management game."	124	7
Retro City Rampage	D3 Publisher	"If you used to play with a Rubik's Cube while eating Space Dust and wearing denim, give it a shot. If not, 90% of it will be lost on you."	123	7
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	Konami	"To play Revengeance through really is to experience the result of a fractured development process."	125	7
Monaco: What's Yours is Mine	Majesco	"Charming, challenging and hugely enjoyable - and an absolute blast with your mates."	127	8
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	Namco Bandai	"Most if not all the sins of the father have been addressed and Ghost Warrior 2 provides many a memorable moment."	126	7
Special Forces: Team X	Atari/Microprose	"When it works, Special Forces: Team X is fairly decent, but all too often it just doesn't."	125	5
Terraria	505 Games	"At times freeing and exciting, at others claustrophobic and spooky, but nearly always worthwhile and cathartic."	127	8
The Cave	Sega	"Really could have done with being a lot more like The Lost Vikings than it actually is."	124	7
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	Activision	"The words 'piss poor' aren't sufficient to describe this game's inadequacy; it is absolute shit."	127	2
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	EA Sports	"Part-time putters could possibly pass, while seasoned swingers will find plenty to justify yet another annual payout."	126	8
Tomb Raider	Square Enix	"Whatever your stance on grave robbing, we implore you to go raiding once again."	125	9

WHAT'S HOT Recent hits we'd recommend...



Monaco: What's Yours is Mine
Majesco / Pocketwatch games
Monaco's strength is the sheer freedom to play around with its beautifully designed maps however you like, making the most of the differing characters and, ideally, sharing it all with a few friends for an added layer of playful intensity. Either way, it's a (safe-)cracking heist - and an absolute blast with your mates.



Terraria
505 Games / Engine Software
At times freeing and exciting, at others claustrophobic and spooky but nearly always wholly worthwhile and cathartic, this is what can happen when you're not a mega-publisher with a multi-million budget and can be free to truly experiment. Chock-a-block with charm and a pleasure to play with friends.



Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge
Tecmo Koei / Team Ninja
There are some notable changes and improvements in this rebuild of what was another disappointing entry in the Ninja Gaiden series. This is certainly a welcome attempt to address issues, yet it's woefully obvious that the one key element still remains elusive - pleasure in actually playing the game.



Army of Two: The Devil's Cartel
EA / Visceral Games
The Devil's Cartel is not a terrible game, nor is it a very good one - it's simply an exercise in mediocrity from start to finish. For most of its seven-hour campaign it truly feels like a phoned-in performance. If you're desperate for another serving of Army of Two, make this a rental at best.

360gamer.com WorldMags.net Previews

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH TOMORROW'S TOP TITLES

PAGE	GAME
99	Grand Theft Auto V
106	FIFA 14
110	Lost Planet 3
114	Remember Me



“We’d rather the dev had focused more on gameplay mechanics than the gender of the protagonist”
REMEMBER ME - 114

KNEE-JERK REACTIONS

BIGGER THAN JESUS:
Grand Theft Auto V

MO BETTA BLUES:
FIFA 14

SURPRISINGLY GOOD:
Lost Planet 3

A LOAD OF PHILIP K DICK:
Remember Me

STAT ATTACK

1

own goal

2

trips to London

14

multiplayer wins

∞

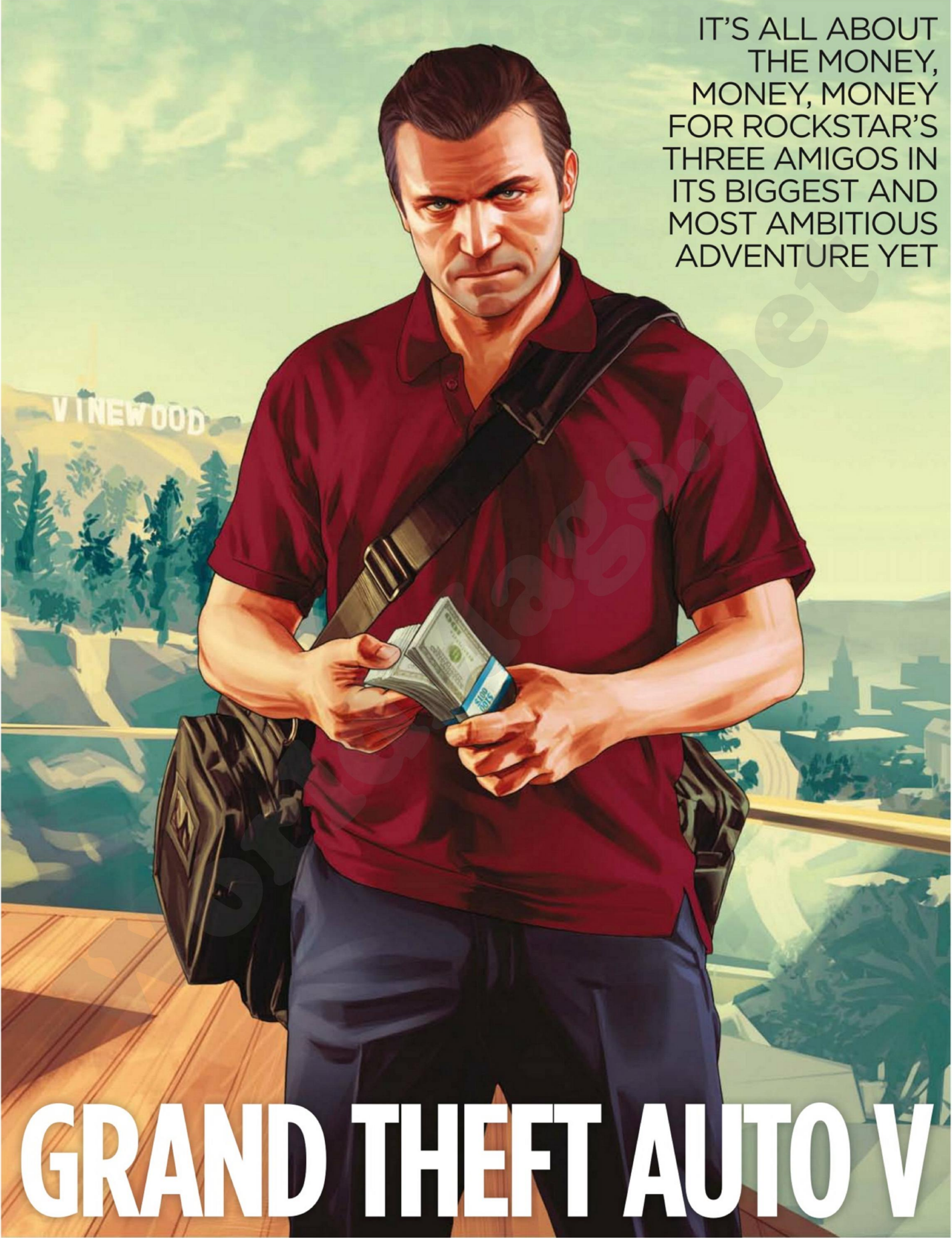
Phil Dick references

60

minutes on
a crap boss

4

sequels



IT'S ALL ABOUT
THE MONEY,
MONEY, MONEY
FOR ROCKSTAR'S
THREE AMIGOS IN
ITS BIGGEST AND
MOST AMBITIOUS
ADVENTURE YET

GRAND THEFT AUTO V



PUBLISHER:
Rockstar Games

DEVELOPER:
Rockstar North

RELEASED:
17 September 2013

XBOX LIVE:
Yes

Franklin, with a parachute firmly strapped to his back, stands in the doorway of a helicopter hovering a mile or so above the sprawling vista of Blaine County. Some way below and to the left is the coastline that bleeds into the Alamo Sea. As the camera pans to the far right we can make out a stack of distant skyscrapers fading into the horizon, where the central city of Los Santos stands. In between is a ragged network of mountains, valleys, rivers and open farmland that spreads as far as the eye can see. And every single inch of it is open for you to explore from the moment the game first boots up.

It's quite an entrance to the sheer scale of what *GTA V* has on offer – the game probably owes a lot to the popularity of *Red Dead Redemption*'s rural exploration, with the inclusion of wildlife roaming the natural habitat adding to the world. But *Grand Theft Auto V* has a landmass that's three and half times bigger than *Red Dead Redemption* and, with air and sea exploration also within your remit, the overall playing area is five times bigger. Or, to put it another way, you could fit the entire worlds of *Red Dead*, *GTA: San Andreas* and *GTA IV* into what *Grand Theft Auto V* has on offer – that's how big it is.

And so Franklin jumps – Franklin, not us, for this was an eyes-only demo of a mere slice of what *GTA V* will be about. Sure, there was a slight hole in our stomach left by the absence of a pad in our hands, but at least it gave us an opportunity to look around at the world that one of the game's three main protagonists was plummeting towards. In the distance we could spot a military base, with a plane rising up into the clouds from a nearby runway. As the parachute was opened and the pace of descent slowed, Franklin glided past an off-road racing circuit, complete with quads and dirt bikes hurtling around at speed.

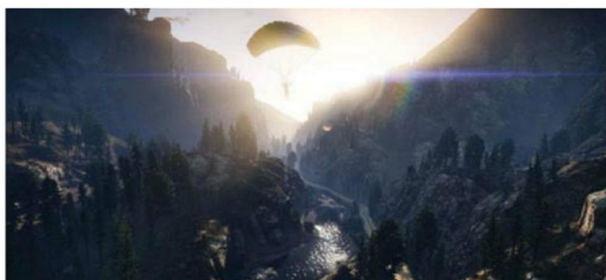
LOOTIN' AND SHOOTIN'



+



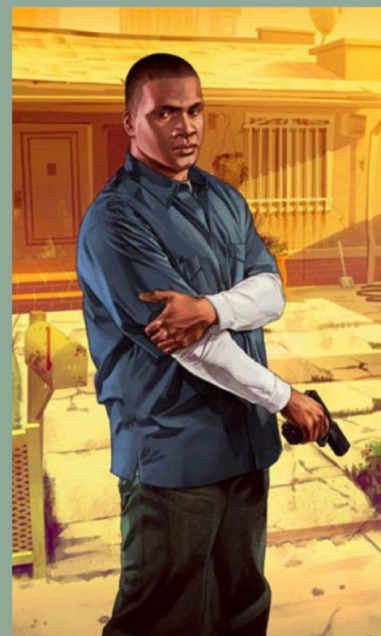
SKYRIM + HEAT: A ridiculously large open world to explore, tied together by three characters hooking up to pull off some elaborate heists. Only with a lot more sunshine, swearing and knob jokes.



GOOD ROBBER, BAD ROBBER

One interesting aside to the three-tiered narrative is that your chosen character can affect how NPCs react, as can the location. Even the time and day/night cycle will change how certain events, sub-missions or activities play out. For example, where Michael is a welcome help coming to the aid of stricken celebrities on Vinewood Boulevard, that person might react differently to Trevor rolling up in a blood-soaked t-shirt under cover of darkness.

But then Trevor may work much better where a little intimidation or brute force is required, and Franklin will also have his own unique circles to move in (based mostly around cars and driving, as well as the clichéd 'ghetto' backdrops), so it pays to think about choosing the right man for the job. It may be one game, but the three characters can give you three very different worlds to move around in.





It's this very attention to detail, and indeed to injecting *life* into the game world, that makes *Grand Theft Auto V* such an impressive project. Much has been made about the sheer wealth of activities on offer, from the full-size golf courses and tennis courts to triathlons and even yoga classes. And while we don't doubt that you could lose days playing the game without ever actually impacting greatly on the main storyline, where previous games have been comparatively lifeless in their surrounding worlds, *GTA V* is positively teeming with people (not to mention animals) going about their daily business, oblivious to your gun-toting, bank-robbing intentions.

OVER LAND AND SEA

As Franklin finally hits terra firma in a lush valley with a river flowing through the middle of it, we're introduced to the game's simple 'switch' mechanic. Simply put you can jump between the three leads at any time: former career

criminal Michael, who's tempted out of witness protection and back into a life of crime; his ex-cohort, pilot and sociopathic nutjob, Trevor; and the repo man and master driver Franklin. Certain missions will require specific characters so there will be some restrictions, but otherwise you're free to swap at will – and when you're out of character the AI will take over and play out their in-game goals.

This means it's probably no surprise that we switch to find Trevor lying unconscious on a beach, wearing nothing but a pair of Y-fronts and surrounded by dead bodies. Needing a quick exit, he jumps into a dinghy and heads out to sea, before strapping on some scuba gear and diving beneath the waves. In the space of ten minutes tops, we'd gone from a mile in the sky to a hundred feet beneath the sea, swimming through a shipwreck and dodging sharks.

Who knows what Trevor might have found down there or what the



ABOVE LEFT: Each character has his own special ability; Trevor dishes more damage, Michael has Bullet Time shots and Franklin can employ slick driving skills.

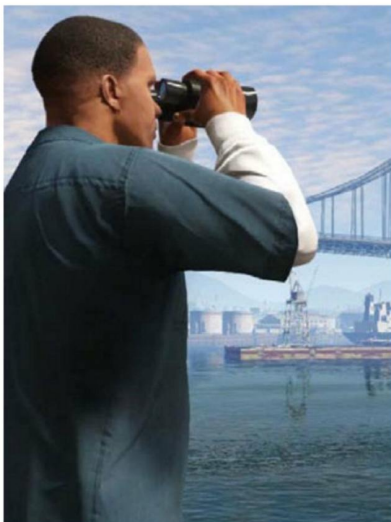


BELOW LEFT: You'll be able to customise a variety of elements, from your look to your weapons and the vehicles that you cruise around in.





ABOVE: With the airspace now open for greater and more picturesque navigation, jumping into a cab for fast travel might become the secondary option.



RIGHT: As you'd expect, there will be a diverse range of environments covering both urban and rural backdrops.

repercussions of his earlier actions might be. But for now it was time to meet Michael: suited up and slurring slightly under the effects of yet another couple of scotches, he was exiting a hotel in the upmarket Vinewood Boulevard area. Walking the streets, he passes ex-starlet Pamela Drake who will drone on about her former glories to anyone who'll listen, and outside a cinema (playing the film *Bitch in the Trunk*) he meets Impotent Rage (the TV superhero) and the Republican Space Rangers from *GTA IV*. As we've said, there's life on every corner.

Around one of those corners Michael hears the cries of A-list celebrity Lacey

Jonas, cornered by paparazzi. He grabs a ride and quickly drives her away from the baying crowd of snappers and back to her luxury home in the hills (with some typically great dialogue along the way: "What do you do? I'm really famous, I don't do anything"). The \$150 tip was a decent reward we guess, but this was only a tiny part of these guys' day and a fraction of the real money they're after.

THE BIG H

The core of *Grand Theft Auto V* is all about Heists – both with and without the capital letter. Those with are the main narrative Heists that drive the storyline and usually bring the three



The Wanted meter remains, but it now works on lines or cones of vision, enabling you to find hiding spots within the traditional search area.





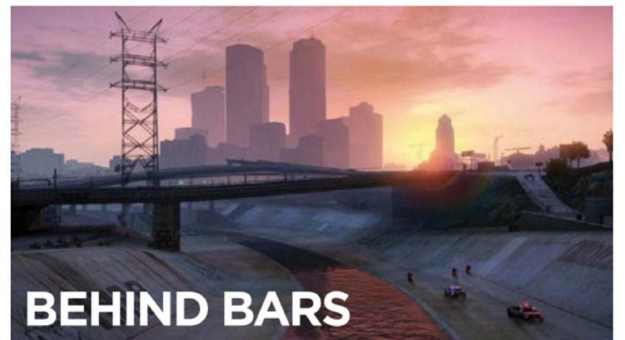
main characters together. They are elaborate multi-layered missions that require careful planning and numerous sub-missions to source relevant materials, recruit additional NPCs to your crew (with varying skills depending on whether you fancy an action/explosive approach or something a little sneakier) and gradually build towards.

The whole crew will share in the cut of your haul (and the Heists should be big bucks) and if one of the NPCs dies your cut increases, although Rockstar wouldn't confirm if you could ruthlessly slay them outside the getaway van to increase your payday. However, we were treated to a lesser heist, which

can be either a secondary 'blitz play' mission to fill up your coffers to pay for one of the bigger jobs, or anything else you feel like on a whim – whether you want to ram-raid a jeweller or take down any one of the many businesses in and around Los Santos for some quick cash.

In this case it was a well-planned attack on an armoured car, where in the build-up you'd have used Franklin to source vehicles for the assault and getaway (our demo was preset with a tow truck and a garbage collector). After meeting up and donning some disguises – boiler suits and facemasks that you can customise for yourself (Rockstar went with a hockey mask, a

ABOVE: You'll have nine key attributes that you can upgrade, covering stamina, shooting, strength, stealth, flying, driving, mechanic, lung capacity and each man's special ability.



BEHIND BARS

Although your mobile phone became a key tool in *GTA IV*, in *V* it's very much the hub of your communications. Rather than just dealing with calls, it's now your gateway to the internet, list of contacts and several other handy tricks and app-based gimmicks. You can even use the phone to take pictures in-game and post your exploits on Facebook. Well, it makes a change from cats and babies we suppose.

Michael is the lead character and will be the... ahem... driving force behind all the Heists.



BELOW: There's a whole seabed to explore, and you can be sure there will be some interesting rewards to justify getting wet.



GOING VIRAL

You may have already seen the viral website www.epsilonprogram.com, a spoof *GTA V* site that in no way is mocking Scientology. It offers words of wisdom on the world of Kiffom from its leader, Cris Formage, and requests money in exchange for enlightenment. There's even a Twitter feed (EpsilonismToday) and a promotional video – and it seems that Cris, who was a radio guest in *San Andreas*, will play a greater role within *GTA V*.



skull and monkey smoking a cigar) – it was down to business.

The action started with Michael driving into position – he'd use his truck to block the road and force the armoured car to stop. Meanwhile Trevor was taking a lookout position on a nearby rooftop to track the incoming vehicle. As Michael took his cue to fill the road and the target slowed down, the game switched out to Franklin who used his tow truck to plough into the side of it and sent it rolling sideways. Jumping out on foot,

Franklin used a sticky bomb to blow the doors while Michael looted the takings – this all happened in no more than about two minutes.

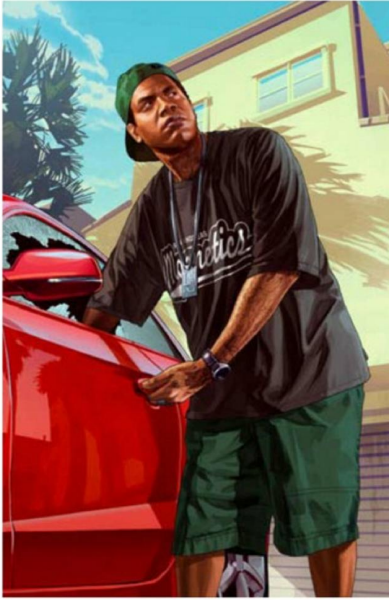
One of the guards is able to hit a panic button, which has police on the scene in moments and turns the heist into a bloody shootout. Both Michael and Franklin take cover, popping up to drill holes in multiple cops, and the gunplay looks much tighter and more responsive than before, with crosshairs giving a red wink when your target is dead. As the action intensifies you can use either of them to offer flanking moves at any time, or swap out to Trevor and use a sniper rifle from afar to pick off incoming

threats. How you do it is all up to you, as the switch mechanic gives you total freedom over the battlefield.

THE GETAWAY

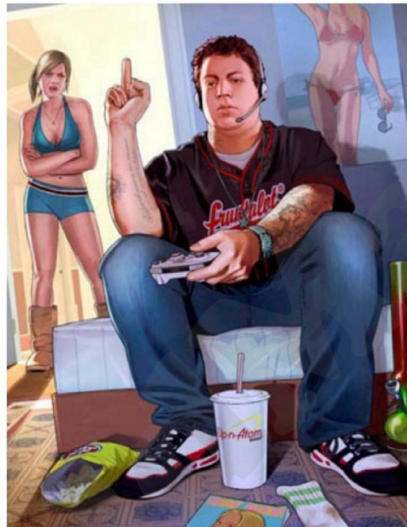
After a few minutes, a helicopter is blown from the sky courtesy of Trevor's rocket launcher (he seems like a man who's always prepared) and Franklin takes the opportunity to jump into the getaway vehicle – which you choose in advance, along with the isolated 'exit' location where you eventually get out, petrol bomb the vehicle to destroy any evidence and head home, presumably to do it all again tomorrow. Unless you fancy a more relaxing day exploring the land, air and sea of Blaine County





and the hundreds of things you can do within it.

Rest assured, *Grand Theft Auto V* will be everything you hoped it would – and probably a heck of a lot more than that. We saw around an hour of the game in action and were left with a sense of awe at what else we hadn't seen. There's still a familiarity to the basic gameplay that will keep seasoned GTA fans happy enough, but there is so much else going on around you that whether you fancy run-and-gun and drive-bys, or a pleasant walk in the park with a spot of BASE jumping and a yoga class, then *GTA V* should keep you coming back for more long into 2014 and beyond. ■



ABOVE: In a first for the series, the game also features an original score along with the usual licensed soundtrack.



WE LIKED

- + It's huge!
- + Heists drive storyline
- + Three characters, three worlds

WE DISLIKED

- It's huge...
- Not playing it
- Goodbye, real world

BELOW: Franklin is a master wheelman, and his special ability can slow down time to dodge police traps or oncoming traffic.

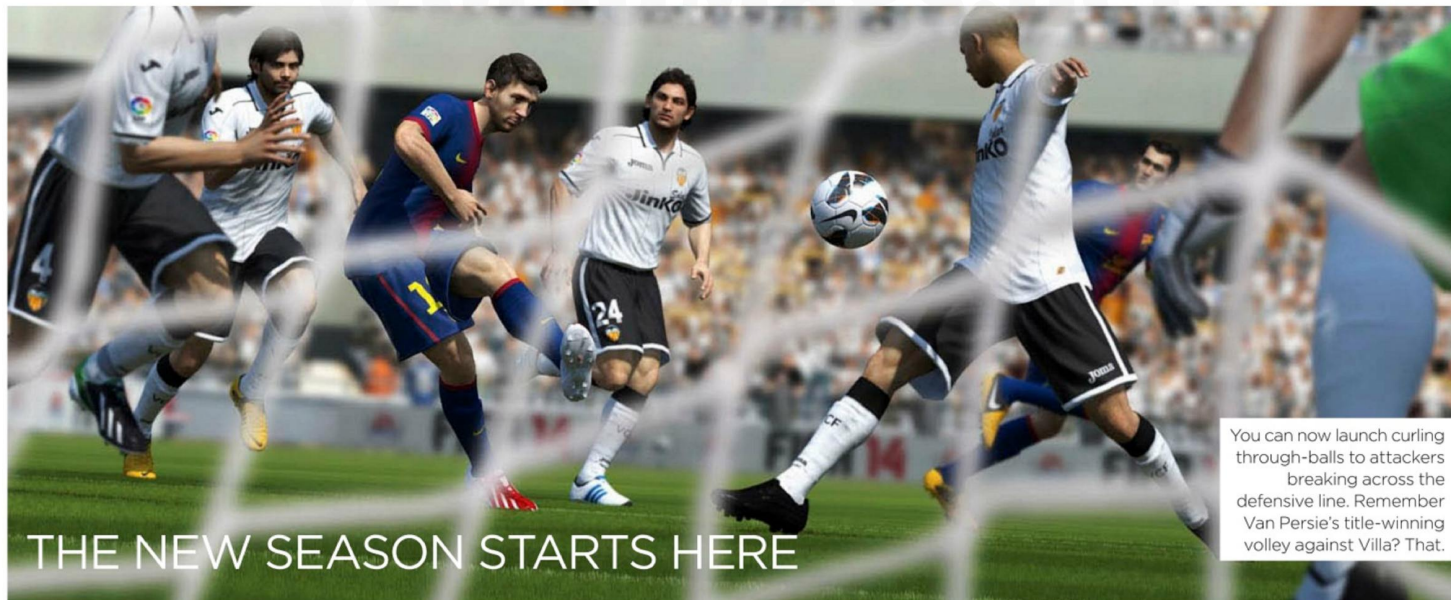


EYES ONLY

Let's go to work...

GRAND THEFT AUTO V

GTA V is certainly huge, of that there is no doubt – and best of all, everything there is to do seems to be worthwhile and meaningful, whether it's working towards another job (either a large Heist or smaller pocket-filler) or just having fun with the toys on offer. Even those activities can be significant, though, with boosts to your core stats and other benefits to taking part that are sure to help you in the long run. But *GTA V* also feels tighter, more structured and with much more life within its expansive world than previous games in the series – and that really is saying something. If this is the now, we can only drool over what Rockstar could do with the next generation of consoles.



You can now launch curling through-balls to attackers breaking across the defensive line. Remember Van Persie's title-winning volley against Villa? That.

THE NEW SEASON STARTS HERE

PUBLISHER:
EA Sports

DEVELOPER:
EA Canada

RELEASED:
Autumn 2013

XBOX LIVE:
Yes

To those who don't play FIFA, the annual list of tweaks and changes may seem like a rather trivial piece of padding to an otherwise standardised formula; modifications that really don't make a great deal of difference and are designed to just squeeze another £50 from your pocket, in exchange for basically the same game you bought last year. Those in the know, however, will appreciate how even small alterations can make a very big difference.

Take *FIFA 13*, for example. The new additions like 'Attacking Intelligence' and 'Complete Dribbling' may sound like minor refinements to features that

should be a part of any self-respecting footy game, but instead they came together to change the way that FIFA could be played.

The days of just bombing down the wings to launch in crosses, or looking for simple combinations to secure those ever-faithful cheap goals could be put behind us, and a more patient, creative and ultimately rewarding FIFA experience emerged – even if it did take some of us a while to adapt to the new playing style.

For the time being, at least, *FIFA 14* looks set to build upon small changes to its existing winning formula, adapting your gameplay options even further.

We say "for the time being" because you can be pretty damned confident that *FIFA 14* will also appear as a next-gen launch title (it's worth noting that the screens provided were tagged as being 'gen3', which refers to the Xbox 360 and PS3 generation of consoles, indicating that 'gen4' images might be imminent). This should lead to host of bigger improvements in terms of the graphics and physics engines, but sadly EA won't be able to talk about such things until Microsoft waves the green flag.

For now, EA Canada is free to talk about such new capital letter-worthy features as Protect the Ball, Pure Shot

REAL MADRID



+



FIFA 13 + THE REAL THING: FIFA's ongoing search for football perfection sees more tweaks and refinements to offer greater realism and more options both on and off the ball.



Players will often be forced to dig shots out from awkward positions, much like in real life.

CENTRAL
SQUAD
TRANSFERS
OFFICE
SEASON

PLAY MATCH
League Match

SIM MATCH

PREVIEW: SPURS VS CHELSEA
Spurs play host to Chelsea on Saturday in a early battle for 4th place ...

GLOBAL SCOUTING NETWORK
M. MILES 7 8
Ciaran Clark CB
Sebastian Coates ICB
Ignasi Miquel CB

RSS FEED
Gareth Bale in great form scoring in back to back matches.
Match Preview: Fulham V Aston Villa.
Robin van Persie's goal keeps Man United clear of City at the summit.

BARCLAYS PREMIER LEAGUE

	PLD	PTS
1 Man United	7	18
2 Man City	7	16
3 West Brom	7	16
4 Spurs	7	14
5 Chelsea	7	12
6 Everton	7	10
7 Arsenal	7	10

and enhanced Teammate Intelligence. With new attacking and defensive options, the aim is to slow the game even further down from its usual end-to-end 'tennis matches', add more midfield tussle to matches and make goal scoring less predictable and far more exhilarating. *FIFA 14* should open up your creativity for carving out chances, but also means those moments will be less repetitive. And with a host of new striking options it should make shooting a far more natural (and thus both spectacular and flawed) part of the game.

To summarise the bulk of these new features, Protect the Ball very

much does what is says on the tin; it gives players better shielding from opponents, even before the ball has reached them. Controlled with the left trigger, this can be used at any speed and subsequently combines with the right stick for skill moves to turn defenders or give you the edge in a midfield battle for possession – although it will be tied in with the game's ongoing momentum physics and the first-touch control system introduced last year.

Pure Shot is the name given to the refined shooting system and there are several new additions to the **B** button (or **X** if you're stuck in your PES ways),

ABOVE: The new menus are much better. As long as the guy who wouldn't stop reading out the scores has gone.

RIGHT: These tech demos are as close as we've seen of the game actually in action, but they show the new skills nicely.



TO PAY THE BILLS

According to the EA Sports team, the skill games introduced in *FIFA 13* (like the one pictured here) proved to be quite a hit with gamers looking to finesse their abilities. And so *FIFA 14* will see an expanded skills section including new routines lifted from the real world, such as passing around one player in a tight square (as seen in pre-match warm-ups) or taking multiple shots with a line-up of footballs. Simply put, there will be even more fun ways to get better at FIFA.





ABOVE: Protect the Ball is more than just improved shielding; it can also be used at speed to fend off tackles and turn defenders.

most notably a new dipping shot that stays low (think Gareth Bale), a rising shot (Steven Gerrard) and the knuckle shot (David Luiz' free kicks). However, equally important is the improved authenticity of timing and positioning.

BELOW: With Pure Shot, players will realistically react to the position of the ball, rather than jerky animations dragging them into place for the shot.



EA SPORTS FOOTBALL CLUB

The online side of *FIFA 14* is set to get an overhaul this year, with changes to the FIFA Ultimate Team set-up and a host of new Live features, as well as greater interaction across mobile and web-based apps via a single user profile. We're also promised a brand new online mode "to encourage social competition", so things could get rather interesting if you're after more than the usual Career options.

Whereas previously the game would automatically stutter or slide the player into position for the shot, now they will have to react realistically, perhaps taking a shot early or digging the ball out from their feet. Tied into new 'real ball' physics, this adds an air of unpredictability about your shooting, with players slicing across the ball to spoon it wide or maybe catching a 30-yarder unexpectedly sweetly and hammering a 'worldy' into the top corner.

There are also new dribbling features that open up far more variables when running with the ball, be it expanding on the unpredictable first touch system to avoid it sticking to your feet, or enabling players on the move to turn both faster and sharper than previously allowed (the game used to be stuck at a 22.5° turning 'circle'). Again, this feeds into the ongoing momentum physics, as well as individual abilities – so Ronaldo will be much more successful

than Phil Neville, for instance, but he's not 100% flawless.

With further intelligence giving attackers even more creative runs to shake off defenders – who, in turn, will have greater positional awareness that will see them more likely to track players than mindlessly chase the ball like an over-eager dog – *FIFA 14* should expand on the cat-and-mouse gameplay of *FIFA 13*. Defenders also have the chance to make a quickfire second challenge, should you miss with your first attempt to steal the ball, and smarter marking should also ensure that the attacking team doesn't have things all its own way.

Obviously the Career mode will be getting some changes as well, although the only key addition being discussed right now is the new scouting network that offers more realistic and ongoing reports. This will save spending time looking for players when the transfer window comes around, and enables





ABOVE: *FIFA 14* should allow a little more composure in possession, keeping the ball until the right pass is on.

you to look for specific traits and attributes, rather than just a rating out of 100. So, to find a tall central defender or a fast striker who's also good in the air, you can make a request and wait for the scouts to come back with some suggestions, as part of an ongoing process in preparation for when the window opens.

That said, sometimes even the smallest things can make a welcome difference and the revised menu system, lifting the simple tabs seen in Ultimate Team for easier navigation (and feedback) on your in-game options, is a definitely a winner in our book – much like *FIFA 14* will almost invariably be. ■



ABOVE: You can have your scouts looking for various types of player all season long. If they come back with Gabriel Obertan, though, fire them.

BELOW: The new Real Ball Physics system can see shots rising, dipping and swerving, depending on the contact made and the momentum of the ball and player.



WE LIKED

- + More flair, less repetition
- + Incredible attention to detail
- + More accessible hub/menus

WE DISLIKED

- Nothing groundbreakingly new
- Waiting for next-gen tech
- You can't feel bullet points



HANDS ON

We're warming up...

FIFA 14

The changes from *FIFA 13* may be small, but we suspect the best is still yet to come just as soon as the next-gen technology is announced and EA is finally free to talk about the full potential of *FIFA 14*. But still, even this early list of refinements looks to be capable of changing the game for the better and becoming an even more realistic representation of the beautiful game. It will be more about maintaining possession and creative, unpredictable play – as opposed to using the same two or three moves over and over. EA says it wants to make every shot “feel real” and for every goal to be “exhilarating” – certainly we can't begrudge it that.

LOST PLANET 3



IF IT BLEEDS, WE CAN DRILL IT

PUBLISHER:
Capcom

DEVELOPER:
Spark Unlimited

RELEASED:
27 August 2013

XBOX LIVE:
Yes

Ever since it surfaced on the 360 back in 2006, the Lost Planet series has suffered an identity crisis. The first game was focused primarily on single-player, with its interesting mix of third-person gunplay and mech combat, while the 2010 sequel switched to a co-operative focus where online teams could partner up to take down one of the larger Akrid – some even likened it to Monster Hunter in space.

Now Capcom has farmed the series out to Spark Unlimited, a Californian studio that (rather worryingly) was responsible for *Turning Point: Fall of Liberty* and *Legendary*, and the overall

balance between the single and multiplayer looks much more even in *Lost Planet 3*.

We were invited to go hands-on with both aspects of the game at a swanky Capcom preview event. Opting to play through the single-player sections first, we were introduced to lead protagonist Jim Peyton as he lands on EDN III near the start of the game. Jim travels to this remote ice planet with the intention of earning enough credits to support his family back on Earth, but the company he's working for is none other than NEVEC – the ruthless corporation that players fought against in the original game.

However, with this being a prequel rather than a sequel, the company hasn't yet turned its hand to tyranny. Small mercies.

Before Jim manages to reach the NEVEC base, both he and the welcoming party are attacked by a swarm of Akrid. Thankfully, these spider-like Akrid are much smaller than the titanic beasts from the previous games, and after whipping out Jim's pistol for a bit of trigger-happy action the convoy was able to return to base. The campaign specifics are still a little thin on the ground, but it seems the NEVEC HQ will act as a central hub. It has three floors that can be accessed

LOST IN TRANSLATION



LOST PLANET + WESTERN THINKING: The first two Lost Planet titles felt distinctly Japanese in their game design, but this here prequel feels like a Western product through and through.





A lot of the weapons may be different, but Spark hasn't forgotten the classic disc grenades.

via an elevator and there's a shop that sells weapons like shotguns and sniper rifles, in addition to a huge hangar that houses the third most important thing in Jim's life – his Rig.

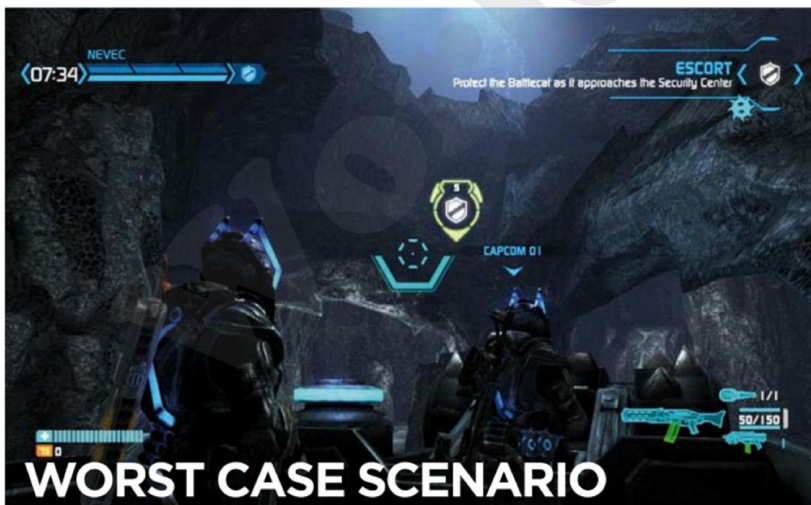
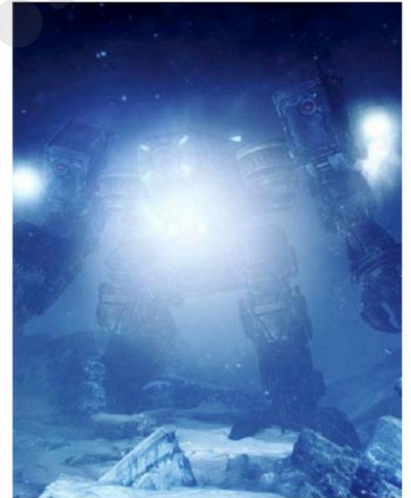
While the previous titles featured militarised VSes (Vital Suits) that were controlled from third-person, *Lost Planet 3* introduces the Rig. Piloting it switches the game to a first-person perspective and, although the lack of machine guns means that you can't stampede into battle like a mech warrior, the workmanlike drill and winch combo enables you to dismantle the medium-sized Akrid with relative ease. The Rig can also morph into a drilling

platform whenever you locate a rich deposit of T-energy, which renders it inoperable for a short period of time so you'll have to fight off waves of Akrid with other weapons until the drilling is complete.

It's an effective way to introduce some horde-style mechanics into the campaign – the kind where you go on the defensive when pulling off an Optimus. The remainder of our single-player taster was spent on a mission tracking down a missing Rig operator; we eventually found him holed up in an underground facility that could only be accessed on foot. After battling some spinning Akrid

ABOVE: That's a Roman nose if ever we saw one. No amount of quality beardage is going to hide that fact.

RIGHT: We're just relieved that the mech controls aren't Kinect-assisted. Yes, we're looking at you, From Software!



WORST CASE SCENARIO

In addition to Stronghold and Alpha Lair, Scenario mode has unique objectives for the Research Lab and Quarantine maps. Research Lab is similar to Rush from Battlefield as the attacking team has to arm a series of explosives while the defenders must stop them. Quarantine, meanwhile, is more like Hardpoint from Call of Duty as the defenders have to guard a room that the attackers are trying to capture. This makes the turrets particularly useful as they turn the room into a killzone.



RIGHT: This is what we're calling the lightning gun. We're sure it has an official name but we forgot to write it down.





ABOVE: Even if the pesky Snow Pirates manage to immobilise the battlecat, the NEVEC team can repair it.

that reminded us of the first boss from *Lost Planet* (only in miniaturised form) we received an emergency call that an emperor-class storm was inbound and to head back to base. We knew exactly what that looks like and decided not to risk it!

Our demo of the single-player was brief, but it seems that Spark is crafting an experience that focuses as much on Jim as it does the planet itself. Mechanically the game feels less arcade-centric and the overall atmosphere is more *Aliens* than anime. The rest of our time was spent playing Scenario in multiplayer – an objective-based mode that changes depending on which map you pick. Stronghold

tasks the NEVEC team with escorting a ‘battlecat’ drilling machine through a number of checkpoints; the Snow Pirate team has to stop the battlecat from reaching its destination by any means necessary.

Scenario mode allows for five players per team in addition to customisable classes. You can pick two weapons, be it the standard assault rifle or one that functions like an electricity dispenser, and also choose from a selection of perk-style buffs and abilities that can be activated with T-energy collected during a match. One of these is a turret that can be used to cover chokepoints, while another enables

you to unleash a cloud of poisonous gas after being downed. This ties in with the bleedout system where you can revive a fallen ally or curbstomp a wounded opponent.

That may sound a bit *Gears of War*, but the grappling hook helps give the multiplayer a sense of identity – you can use it to quickly reach higher ground and there’s no limit to its potential. Indeed, the hook was particularly useful on the Alpha Lair map, where both teams had to hunt down a large Akrid and collect the special T-energy capsule it dropped. An effective tactic was to use the grappling hook to hide in the upper caverns and then steal the capsule

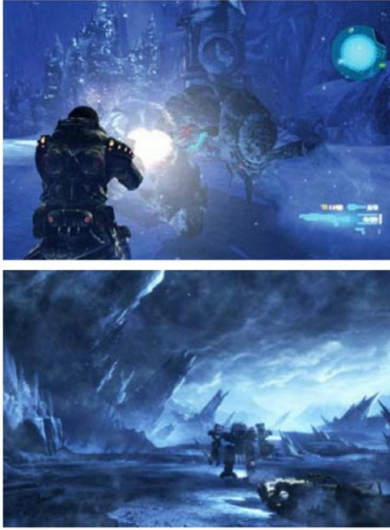
BELOW: Akrid Survival is another Scenario mode where both teams try to wipe out as many enemies as possible.



TALK TO ME

One thing that really does set *Lost Planet 3* apart from its predecessors is the human interaction. The original had little in the way of memorable faces and the sequel was more concerned with customisation than characterisation. In *Lost Planet 3*, we see Jim losing his temper with the chief engineer after they assemble his Rig without permission and he watches video messages from his wife during missions. Aww.

BELOW: He may not look very dangerous right now but, when this guy starts spinning out, things can get very messy.



once the other team had expended its ammo – after all, there are no bonus points for playing nice.

As our time with *Lost Planet 3* drew to a close, it was clear that Spark had put an equal amount of effort into the single and multiplayer. Both are looking suitably polished at this stage, but there's a part of us that looks at this game and sees a supermarket sandwich rather than a restaurant meal. It looks filling, it probably even tastes good, but it's a little hard to get excited about. We hope we're wrong and that Jim's tale and the intensity of the multiplayer are so much more than they appear, but for now we'll stay frosty and hope for the best. ■



ABOVE: We didn't get the opportunity to pilot the Rig during the multiplayer, but it definitely packs a fair old punch.

LEFT: It's sure not the most stylish game you'll play this year, but Spark has definitely nailed the Hoth vibe.



BELOW: These sneaky little Akrid are everywhere. At least it only takes two pistol shots to put them down.

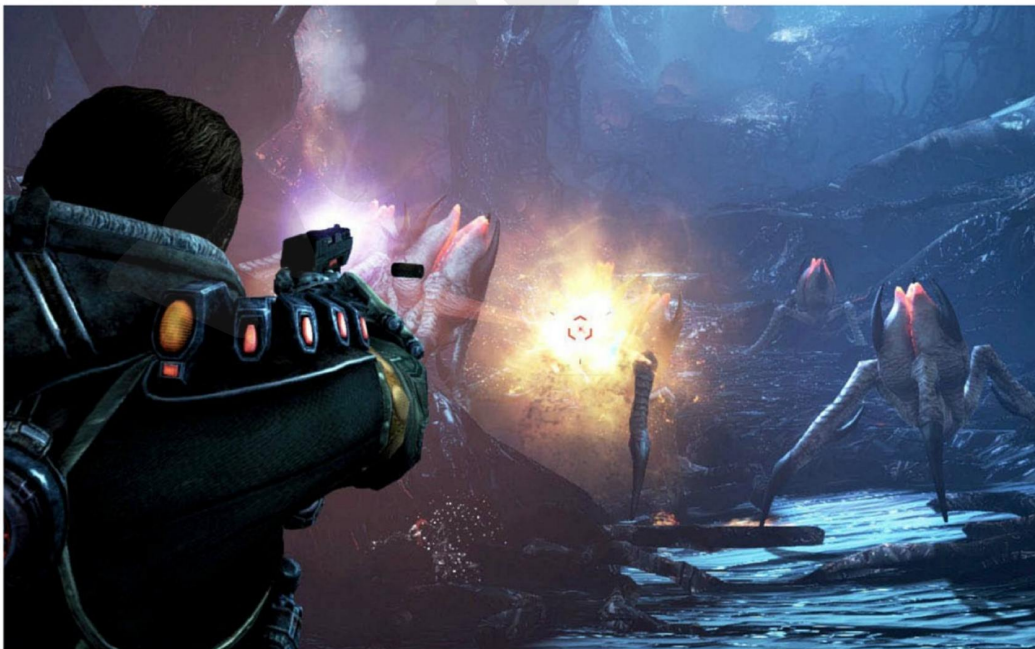


WE LIKED

- + The story feels more grounded
- + Some interesting online modes
- + Balance of single and multiplayer

WE DISLIKED

- Somewhat of a standard shooter
- We want to see more Rig action
- May not stand out from the crowd



HANDS ON

We didn't get frostbite...

LOST PLANET 3

Whenever Capcom exports its IP to a Western developer the result can go one of two ways; either we get a success story like *Devil May Cry* or a complete disaster like *Operation Raccoon City*. Based on the evidence we've seen so far *Lost Planet 3* is looking like a worthy, if slightly tepid, addition to the series. Part of us laments the switch back to a single-player campaign, but Spark is pushing for a story that players will want to see through to the end. As for multiplayer, this game is going to have a serious fight on its hands with the likes of *Gears of War: Judgment* and the upcoming *Fuse* (not to mention COD and Battlefield) but it's definitely in with a shot.

REMEMBER ME



... NOW THAT MIGHT JUST NOT BE VERY LIKELY

PUBLISHER:
Capcom

DEVELOPER:
DontNod
Entertainment

RELEASED:
07 June 2013

XBOX LIVE:
No

It has been said that we lucky humans get to die three times: once in the moment our bodies give up, next is that bit where close ones gather to say “so long” and then comes the last one, in which our names are never mentioned ever again, nor our existence reflected upon.

Makes you think, doesn't it... well, perhaps not. But since *Remember Me*'s plot is about the entire population of 2084 Neo-Paris being seemingly obsessed and driven by the storage, transfer, sharing, sale and theft of memories thanks to incomprehensible technology, we had to start somewhere – and it's probably a no-brainer that

human memories are pretty damned important to humanity.

But here's our central problem with everything other than the mechanics of what is one of the most visually impressive games we've seen: having now played nearly half of it, we're still none the wiser as to why anyone would be all that fussed about experiencing someone else's memory. Especially if in doing so they'd have to be surgically altered by technology that people like central character Nilin can abuse, or that can just go wrong.

According to the fiction it's even possible to be addicted to other peoples memories as if they were

drugs, to use them medically and for them to be infiltrated and rearranged to the point where you could be going about your day and then suddenly realise that you should kill yourself. You might think Facebook updates can get pretty damned annoying, but at least a mundane collection of real-life snippets can't drive you bonkers just by reading them (well, at least not *that* much).

So *Remember Me* is quite beautiful, but it's often quite nonsensical. Ignore it as science fiction and consider it more as a science Final Fantasy and at least you won't have to get too preoccupied about its daft central concerns. Then

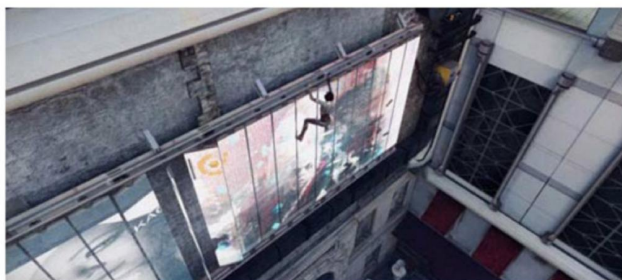
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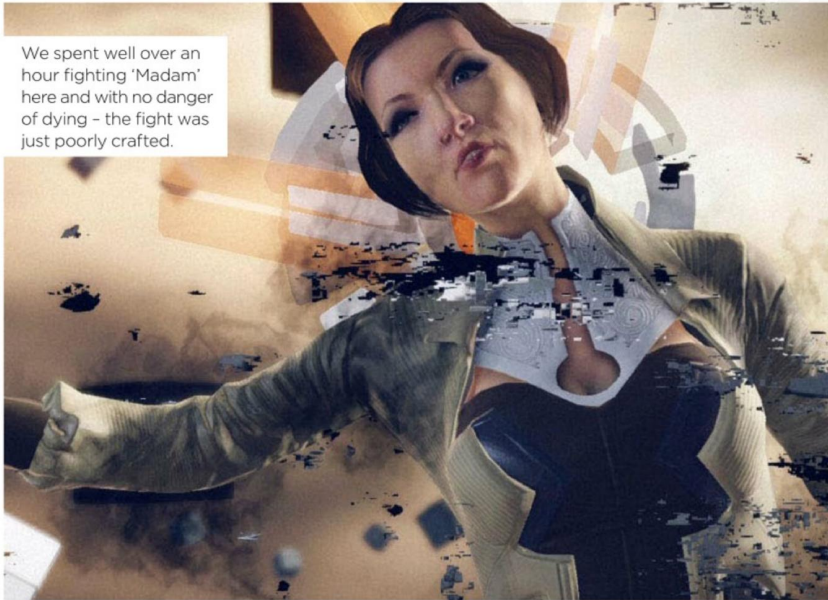


AEON FLUX + TOTAL RECALL: But mostly take into account lots and lots of climbing, some fighting, a small amount of memory editing and a lot of incredulity.



IS THIS JUST FANTASY?

You can't go anywhere in *Remember Me* without a great many things being overlaid with what is presumably a futuristic version of Google Glass that's installed right in your head. The thing is, we might have that all wrong since many such holographic additions seem solid. So while there's a definite coolness to the design, quite what it represents isn't that obvious. Weirdly, the game can't stop explaining simpler concepts – it's probably all very poetic.



We spent well over an hour fighting 'Madam' here and with no danger of dying – the fight was just poorly crafted.

we can move on to what it really is: an action title constructed around three main and excruciatingly so-so elements.

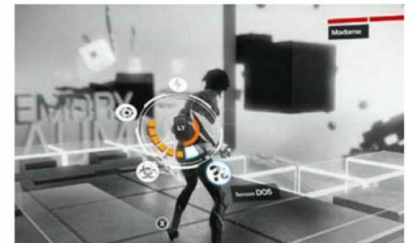
Simply getting around Neo-Paris isn't pleasurable. You're not really able to explore it and are instead brutally corralled in the direction you must go. It's not possible to interact with anyone or anything bar health stations and door switches, nor climb on things that you're not supposed to. The act of climbing and leaping is, well, pedestrian and dull in a world where *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* came out ten years ago. Heavily signposted throughout and requiring

the minimum of thought, it is clear that such lifeless 'gameplay' only exists to get you between plot points, fights and rare interactions.

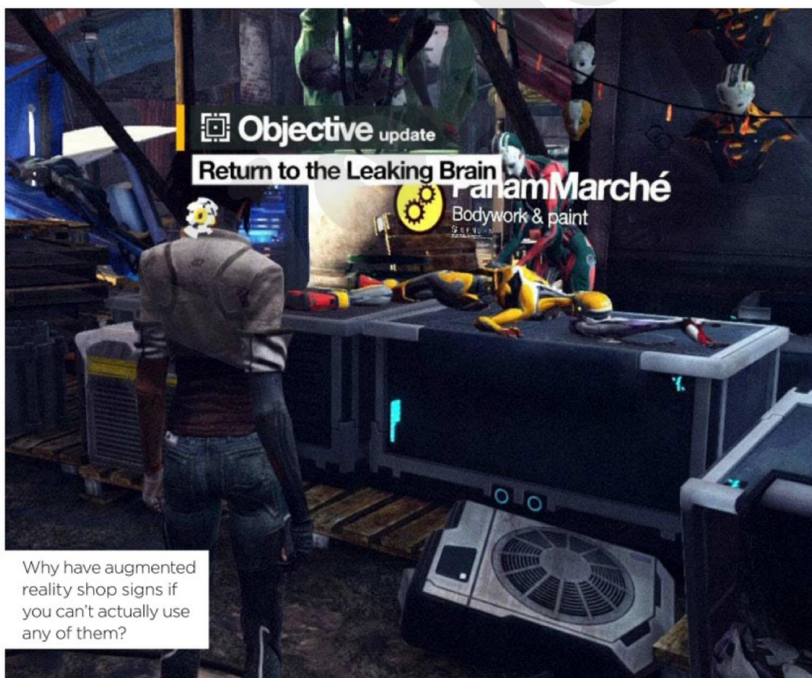
Ah, the combat. It's entirely based on a customisable combo system – and already you're getting far too excited since, while certainly not a button-masher, the art of fighting still manages to feel no less flat and plodding. As Nilin regains the ins and outs of who she is (of course her memory's been wiped – it's the unwritten law of Philip K Dick), it's possible to place more timed button presses in a sequence built out of unlocked strikes.



ABOVE: Neo-Paris itself can be quite lovely, as is a lot of the character design work. *Rise of the Robots*, anyone?



RIGHT: Accessing unlocked super attacks slows down time – it would just be nice if you could still move the camera.

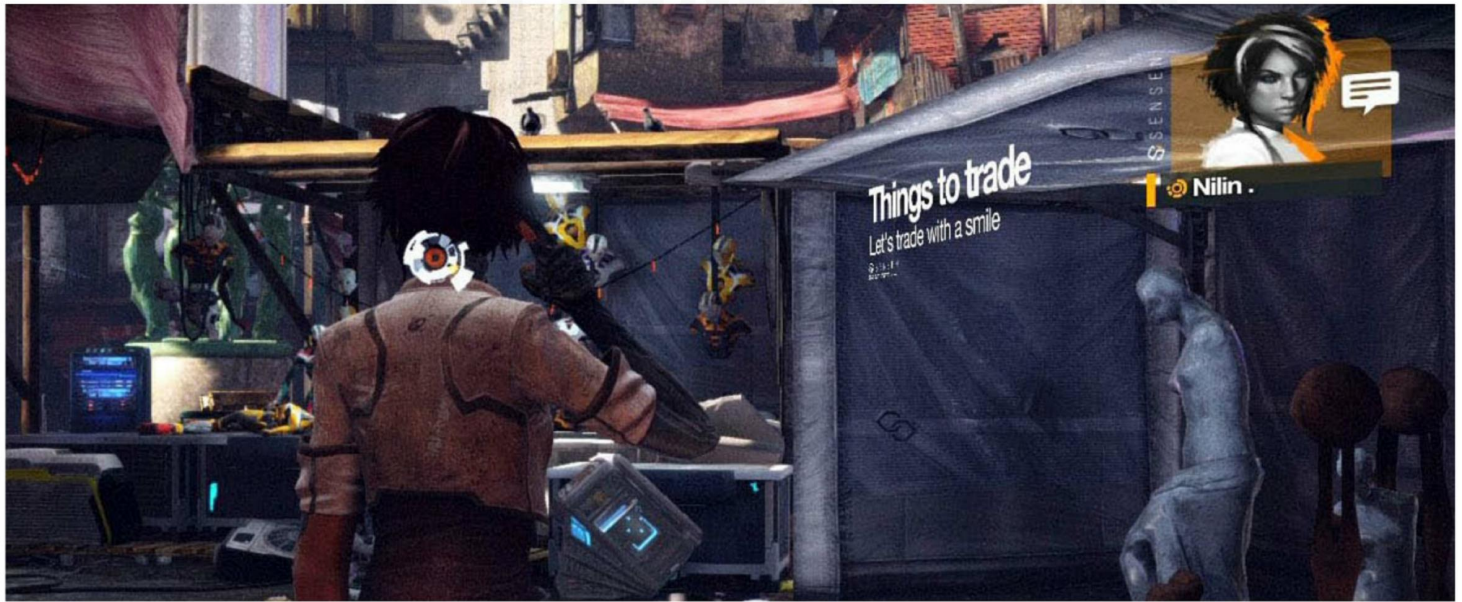


Why have augmented reality shop signs if you can't actually use any of them?



MUNDANE IN THE MEMBRANE

As Nilin regains memories her combat abilities increase, and fights that are initially against berks like this become more involved. You must take into account flying robots, too, for example. But you know how in *Devil May Cry* you need to keep on your toes because the variety of enemies faced at once requires a considered response? Well, we're at 50% completion and there's nothing that engaging here.



The further these attacks are placed along the combo string, the more effective they are – but there's only a handful of types available. You sure don't select from a library of martial arts moves and the sub-screen used to sort them out really could do with not being so darn clumsy.

There are moves that deal extra damage, and can be used to help batter an opponent and open up a final killer 'Memory Overload' attack. There are moves that help Nilin regain health, moves that knock time off the clocks that countdown to when she can use specials (activated by pausing a fight and accessing a wheel) and moves that help you chain combos with extra power.

The idea is that you have huge freedom to create **X** and **Y**-based combos to suit your fighting style. However, since our fighting style was all about knocking people out to get the excessively long scraps to

conclude, we stuck with one that did damage, healed us, knocked seconds off the super-move clock and could be repeated in as easy-to-remember manner possible. Look out, here's a group of bad guys – better tap **X, Y, X, Y, X, Y** and occasionally **A** to jump out the way of an incoming strike, then repeat ad nauseam.

Then come those scarce sections in which you get to edit another person's memory as though it existed on magnetic tape, spooling through by rotating a thumbstick for an agonisingly long time. Aspects that can be altered will visibly quiver when you pass them, so it's simply a case of hurting your thumb and altering

ABOVE: Again, there's actually NOTHING to trade or be done here that isn't just walking around.

BELOW: There are sights to see, just nothing to interact with, which in this case is just as well.

what can be altered. There's no way of knowing how it should be done; everything must be tried until success is found. So you can't lose, you just have to persevere.

If *fun* can actually be added to the game, we might just have something still as gorgeous, but less banal. ■

WE LIKED

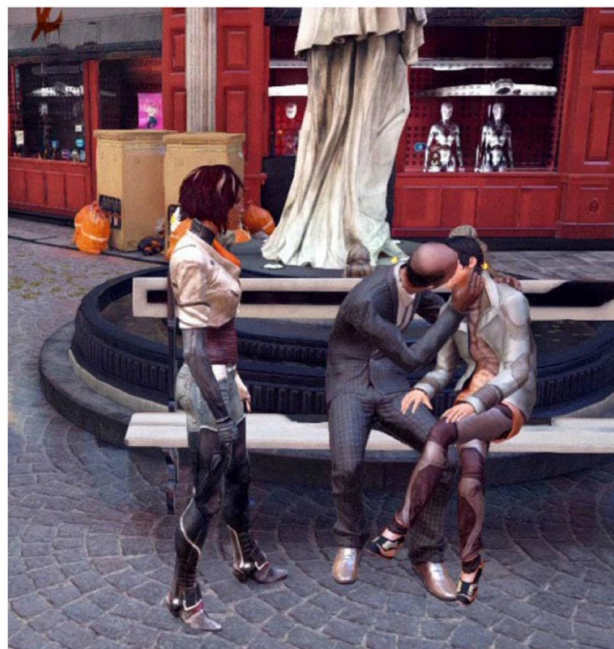
- + Tremendous visual style
- + Seriously, it looks good
- + Did we mention it's pretty?

WE DISLIKED

- Drawn-out combat engagements
- Mundane navigation
- Wishing it was just a cartoon



ABOVE: So, to get money you have to work out what memory you don't mind losing. Cash for senility? Haven't we done that before?



HANDS ON

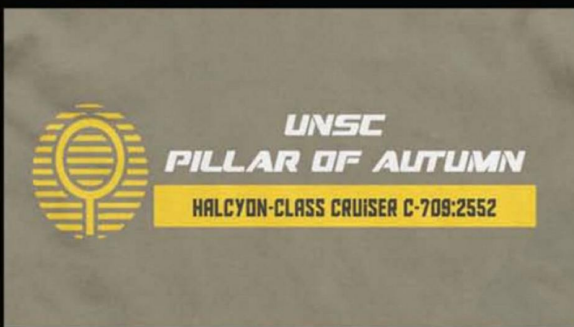
We didn't recall having fun...

REMEMBER ME

DontNod reckons that Nilin being a female makes some kind of political statement, but since the box art is all about her impressive arse we're not sure what that point actually is. It fought hard for her to be a woman, apparently, although we'd rather it had focused more on actual gameplay mechanics that are pleasurable to engage with than the gender of the protagonist – or even the lushness of the visuals. It's not that linearity is always a problem, but in a setting that's so inciting you would expect to be able to interact with it in some way – and such restrictions are sorely dated. *Remember Me* needs more life, in all areas, then it might be cracking. But it's out in two weeks...

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COMMUNITY NEWS

THE LATEST NEWS FROM AROUND
THE ONLINE XBOX WORLD

CRIME PAYS

Although the Xbox version found itself delayed due to some unexpected (well, are there any other kind?) multiplayer bugs, *Monaco: What's Yours Is Mine* still managed to raise enough money to pay off its Indy Fund investments before it was even released – on any system. And that means Steam and the PC. “Man our direct sales have been crazy good with all this press,” tweeted the game’s programmer and general top bloke, Andy Schatz. All this press... hey, that’s us! Well, partially – but we’re not done highlighting the heist game’s charms yet – go to the Marketplace and buy it, and do it now. DO IT.



GAMER CLICHÉS

“We’re always looking at ways to give our audience more of what they’re interested in,” said Larry Hryb, Microsoft’s director of programming for Live, to www.polygon.com. So what do they want? Here’s a clue, he’s talking specifically about Americans here. “If you look at our audience, they love pizza. I mean, who doesn’t? It has international appeal, and Pizza Hut is a recognized name that matches up well with the Xbox brand.” Genius, there’s now an app that American 360 gamers can use to order pizza – and what’s more they can even use Kinect to add their own toppings. Now for a UK version that delivers curry, rice and chips to our doors – scrummy.



CAPCOMICAL

You know how it’s quite cool that you can take your character from the original *Dragon’s Dogma* and beam them right into *Dragon’s Dogma: Dark Arisen* and carry on? Well it’s not actually that cool. *Arisen* is basically an expansion pack and so such a feat should be expected – but we digress. Capcom has announced that a patch it released, presumably to fix something that was a bit broke, actually had a tendency to corrupt saves – and it did so across both versions of the game. Listen carefully and you might still hear some high-level veteran players weeping into their horn or vlog. Should have used an external storage device off the cloud, really... Hey, who knew? Well now you do, so be wary.



SKYRIM SUCCUMBS

EPIC RPG RETIRES WITH ARROW/KNEE WOUND

Looking forward to more tasty *Skyrim* DLC? Then you, weary adventurer, are sadly poop out of luck. Bethesda Game Studios will still be releasing minor updates but, aside from those, that’s it. *Skyrim* is over and there will be no more *Skyrim*. You’ll just have to restart with another character and do it all again, possibly again.

But don’t just take our word for it; here are some words posted by the developer over on www.bethblog.com that, if translated into a Thu’um, would crack the planet asunder: “For the last year and a half we’ve been working on new content for *Skyrim*; from the game updates, Creation Kit, Steam Workshop, Kinect support, to DLCs. Parts of the team have also been in pre-production on our next major project, and that game is at the point where it requires the studio’s full attention to make it our biggest and best work yet.”

Still not convinced that the end has come? Then Bethesda marketing boss Pete Hines has a tweet aimed right at you and it goes a little something like this: “For those asking, yes, today’s thanks/farewell *Skyrim* post does mean there is no more DLC coming”. BOOM! It. Is. Over.

This also means that something else pretty nifty is well into being begun, though, and that something else is going to be Bethesda’s “biggest and best work yet.” Ooh, exciting – and so much so that we can’t help but get a train of speculation right out of the station. Actually, forget that and let’s be daring: *Fallout 4* is in production, will be the biggest and best thing its developer has ever made and you can definitely expect to be playing it sometime in 2014 – fact. ■



ABOVE: By now you will have realised that all these screens came exclusively from *Skyrim* DLC – of which there will be no more.

Got any community or clan-related news you want to share with us? Fire an email to mail@360-gamer.com now!

ABOVE: Don’t worry about this guy – he’s off to star in remakes of those Eighties Listerine commercials – ohh Clifford!



Like our page at www.facebook.com/360gamer and follow @360_gamer on Twitter and we can be BFFs!

CLAN-ON-CLAN ACTION

Fancy getting your clan in the mag? Then get in touch today!

League Name: Xbox Clan Leagues (XBCL)

Website address: www.xbcl.co.uk

Type of League: FIFA 13 Gaming League

Xbox Clan Leagues www.xbcl.co.uk



We spoke to you back in issue #93 and since then you've become a purely FIFA-based league. What brought on the change?

JazZie FIZZle: FIFA is something we are much more passionate about as it is the game we admins enjoy the most. We think that being big fans of the game ourselves helps us to understand what's best for the community and also to see first-hand which rules and settings work best. We always ran small tournaments on FIFA previously; these were growing in popularity and, with numerous requests from our community, we slowly introduced more FIFA activity onto our website. Eventually we made the big decision to focus solely on FIFA as we believe that by concentrating on one game only, we can provide better leagues and build a stronger and closer community.

You've got some sponsorship from EA. Has that put greater emphasis and interest on your FIFA leagues?

Gaining the sponsorship of The EA Sports Dugout was a major achievement for us and something that has helped make all our hard work even more worthwhile. It is nice to be noticed by the main people who make the game our league is based on and we couldn't have asked for anything better. They have also provided sponsorship by giving out prizes to all of our Season 8 Singles division champions, which included an EA goody bag filled with lots of EA Sports merchandise.

We would really like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Rich and the rest of the EA Sports Dugout team for their continued support and sponsorship of XBCL, and we look forward to building on our partnership.

So what's the new set-up for the Xbox Clan Leagues?

We have a wide variety of different FIFA 13 leagues on different game modes to suit all interests and requirements. If you like to prove

that you're better than all the rest we offer our Singles league which is now almost on its tenth season, or if you enjoy building your ideal team and testing it against others we have our Ultimate Team league which is on its second season. However, we also have the upcoming season five of our Pro Clubs league which appeals to groups of people who like to play FIFA together as a team and battle it out against other FIFA teams.

Other than our general weekly fixture leagues, we also offer a wide variety of different FIFA 13 Knockout tournaments that run alongside our leagues, with the latest being our first pairs tournament, and also ladders for you to compete to get to the top. The majority of our leagues, ladders and tournaments all have prizes – usually Microsoft Points for the winner!

How do people go about getting involved in the leagues?

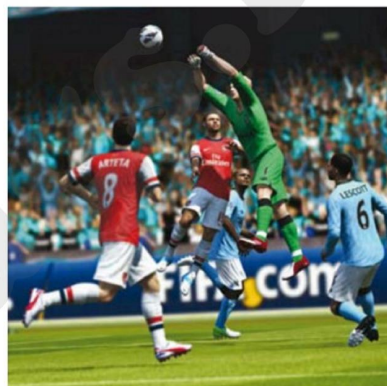
With our new website it's simple – all you have to do is visit, register and then submit an application from the drop-down menu for whichever league you wish to join. All of the leagues are completely free and all we ask is that you follow the rules and keep XBCL the friendly environment it has always been. You can also contact us via Xbox Live, Twitter, Facebook or email.

Any objections to a bunch of noobs just wanting to sign up and play for a few laughs?

Xbox Clan Leagues is all about having fun and that's what we try to promote through our leagues; we are able to



LEFT: The league has a brand new website designed from scratch and packed with the latest news and results from the worlds of FIFA and 'real' football.



ABOVE: We can imagine league members getting all dressed up for the cup finals and holding mock press conferences in the kitchen while making cups of tea.



appeal to all levels. Higher up in the divisions we have tough competition for those of you that want to take the gaming slightly more seriously than others, but for people who just play for fun, you're welcome too! We like to keep the leagues balanced and friendly, providing somewhere that gamers can have a laugh together.

If you are a member of an organised clan and would like your group featured in the mag, contact us at mail@360-gamer.com

YOUR XBOX LIVE TOP FIVES

PLAYED

1. Call Of Duty: Black Ops II
2. Minecraft: Xbox 360 Edition
3. FIFA 13
4. Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
5. NBA 2K13

ARCADE

1. Minecraft: Xbox 360 Edition
2. Poker Night 2
3. Terraria
4. BattleBlock Theater
5. From Dust

INDIE

1. CastleMiner Z
2. White Noise Online
3. Total Miner: Forge
4. Shark Attack Deathmatch
5. CastleMiner

Ah, order is restored once again – after a one-month sabbatical, *Minecraft* is back on top of the Arcade charts, the Indie listings are packed with miner clones and we're all playing FIFA and COD as normal. Credit to *Poker Night 2* for breaking in, though, and the mighty *NBA 2K13*, which no doubt is benefiting from the Playoffs right now.



NBA 2K13

MARKETWATCH

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DLC



BORDERLANDS 2 - PSYCHO PACK

Price: 800MSP

It's not like many *Borderlands 2* fans needed an excuse to jump back into the game, following the Level Cap increase a couple of months back, but if you do then perhaps the addition of a new playable character will help. Krieg is his name and he comes under the banner of a Psycho Bandit, packing some head-splattng melee weaponry and proving a dab hand with dynamite. You can also expect an announcement for the fourth DLC pack (due in June) to follow shortly, so there's still plenty of life within the wilds of Pandora yet.

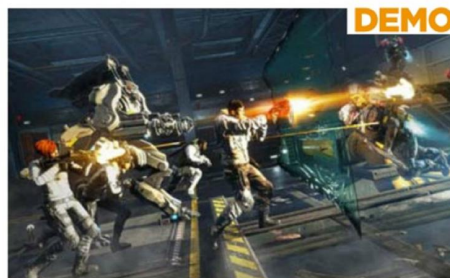


DLC

INJUSTICE: GODS AMONG US - LOBO

Price: 400MSP

It was inevitable that new characters for *Injustice* would filter through as DLC shortly after launch - and first up is bounty hunter Lobo. The Main Man is a super-cool badass and his skills translate nicely into the game, with his hooked chain doubling up with his shotgun to keep the combos ticking over. He can also call on his space hog to plough into his opponent or use its burners to toast their faces. If you're into *Injustice*, he's surely a tempter - and with Batgirl also available they could make a mean tag team.



DEMO

FUSE

Price: Free

If the game is going to live up to its name, someone really could do with lighting that titular spark and igniting this puppy, as *Fuse* has been flying low under the radar of late. This is surprising because a) it's an EA release, and that's one marketing machine that rarely holds back, and b) this co-op based shooter was looking pretty damned sweet the last time we saw it. Still, you can dip your toes in its waters ahead of its 31 May release with a playable demo - along with the likes of *MotoGP 13*, which enables you to take a spin around Catalunya.



INDIE

S.D.G.T

Price: 80MSP

Many Xbox 360 owners are quick to dismiss the Indie Games channel. And sometimes with good reason, as we appreciate that there are a lot of games on there that don't even justify the nominal price tag. However, it's worth looking through every now and then and watching out for gems such as *Rad Raygun* that ripple through the community. One recent game that caught our eye (and a Facebook compo!) was *S.D.G.T*, a neat spin on the tower defense genre that has you blasting spaceships from the sky from seven upgradeable turrets. For a pound, why not?

LIVE LESSON

This issue we discovered that...
... always-on turns a heck of a lot
of people very much off

BRIBING
THE RISING SUN

So, what do *Battlefield 3*, *BioShock Infinite*, *Borderlands 2*, *Caladrius*, *Call of Duty: Black Ops II*, *Child of Eden*, *Crysis 3*, *Dance Central 2*, *DoDonpachi: Saidaioushou*, *Far Cry 3*, *Forza Horizon*, *Forza Motorsport 4*, *Gears of War: Judgment*, *Halo 4*, *Monster Hunter Frontier G*, *Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge*, *Resident Evil 6*, *Resident Evil Revelations*, *Skyrim* and *Tomb Raider* have in common?

They're all Xbox games, they've all recently appeared in an alphabetised list that's quite exhausting to read, and Microsoft wants to bribe Japanese gamers to collectively play them for over a million bloomin' hours – quite the ask, that.

Japanese gamers haven't exactly flocked to the Xbox and still would rather roll ball bearings down a board full of pegs than get involved with the console, which is where this Aim to Do It task much comes in. Entrants won't have to be Gold members in order to take part, but they will need to be involved in the Xbox Live Rewards Program and be connected to the internet during play.

They'll also not *really* have to play for a million hours, they'll just make



more virtual money if they do. A mere 300,000 hours will reward all Gold members with a life-changing 100 Microsoft Points while those who don't give a fig about proper Xbox Live membership will still get a full 10 Points. Half a million hours nets 200 Points for Gold and 20 for no Gold, and onto the full million hours where 400 and 30 Points will be dished out by the corporation.

See, it's not as if Microsoft's not trying its best. *Caladrius* and *Monster Hunter Frontier G* are exclusives to Japan, for goodness sake.

ABOVE: We can only assume that the number of Japanese *Child of Eden* players that also use Kinect is pretty damned small.

LEFT: What Microsoft really needs to do is stop *Monster Hunter* from appearing on any other console, but only in Japan.

LEFT: Perhaps one day you'll get to play *Caladrius* over here, but until then look at this pic and make "pew-pew!" noises.

MY FAVOURITE
ACHIEVEMENT

BORDERLANDS 2

Forum poster **Savage hamster** really does know how to avoid messing about when it comes to explaining how he found himself happy at earning 10G. The Achievement: Well That Was Easy. The task: shooting Face McShooty in his face. "I like this one because it's just so odd." It certainly is, since it's not often you meet a guy who is desperately begging for a headshot. "I think this shows the sense of humour possessed by those at 2K." Oh, it is one big broken jar of crazy, ain't it – and by "it" we mean Gearbox, which allegedly paid for *Borderlands 2*'s development with money that was to be spent on *Aliens: Colonial Marines*. Bonkers.

Got a favourite Achievement? Post it up at the www.360-gamer.com forums!

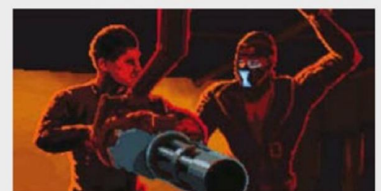
ARCADE EYE

Fingering a future Arcade hit



MUNCHKIN

Just look at this picture of the Tinderbox Entertainment devs playing games in their office and acting like they don't care for real work. Ah, but they *are* working and, more specifically, they are getting their heads around Steve Jackson's immensely popular Munchkin card game where the idea is to enter a dungeon, kill monsters then stab your buddies in the back. It's heee-larious and popular, too – the physical version has sold over a million units – and Tinderbox will be releasing a Live Arcade version this year. Now, somebody convert *Mansions of Madness* to Live, pronto!



ARCADE ATTACK:

Live score challenge

BLOOD DRAGON

We're still a *far cry* from having had all the fun that Ubisoft's disjointed take on its fevered dreams of late-Eighties, early Nineties and then mid-Eighties direct-to-video awful awesomeness can offer. And if that's a bit of a mouthful then just try to chow down on the score we're asking you to get: it features the number nine, nine times. That's 999,999,999 and it's impossible to attain a higher score because that would require there to actually be space for an extra digit. There isn't, but we're not asking the impossible here – just rinse the sumbitch and you too will see your name at the top of the boards.

We're not shy about our opinions on games, so why not join us and maybe you too can feel the joy of seeing your name in print. Write a 250-word review for us and have the chance to get your work published in the greatest and most modest Xbox 360 magazine in the world.

Send your review to our digital mailbag at mail@360-gamer.com, or alternatively post it at the www.360-gamer.com forums for some feedback from your fellow readers!

WORDS, WITH FRIENDS

GREAT CHATS, GOOD PEOPLE

"As an online discussion grows longer," suggests Godwin's Law, "the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches one." Well that's all well and good, but it doesn't seem to be a rule that you can easily attach to **www.360-gamer.com's** rather reasonable forum. It's the place to visit if you want to engage in a wide variety of topics and not get roasted by idiots.

Most musings are to do with the Xbox 360 and gaming in general, as you'd expect, but if you fancy seeing a movie clip of a man inflating a water-filled condom on his head in detailed and epic slow-motion then our beloved members have that covered too. It's a no-lose kind of deal.

So what else has had the site's forum members chatting? **Voodoo Spaceman** has quite a few things to say about female game characters shedding stereotypes and really doesn't have much truck with titles that aim for too much realism.

"*Rainbow Six Vegas 2* had the option for a lady soldier, so why not COD? That's a bit annoying", added **Nomadic Mango**. Fair point. Maybe women make for unfairly smaller targets? It's tricky; we certainly remember that anyone playing as the Monkey in *TimeSplitters* had a real advantage by being much shorter and smaller. All men are the same size, right?

DEL50PLUS has been wondering whether *Call of Juarez Gunslinger* will actually be any cop, rather than a load of stale pump. Sorry we couldn't help you that much with our hands-on

preview – the level at which Ubisoft let us play really didn't help us decide, so as of writing this we're still unsure. The near-constant voiceover during the main campaign could get more than a bit wearing.

And then there's **The Gazatron's** initial anger at, then mild acceptance of, the blockbuster movie *Iron Man 3*. "I just came out thinking... I hate it!" began a forum poster who really does seem to know his Marvel comics – and how not to add spoilers. "I feel the Extremis virus was underutilised, but, what they did use of it was actually quite well done – 7/10." Nice, but we'll wait for the Blu-ray.

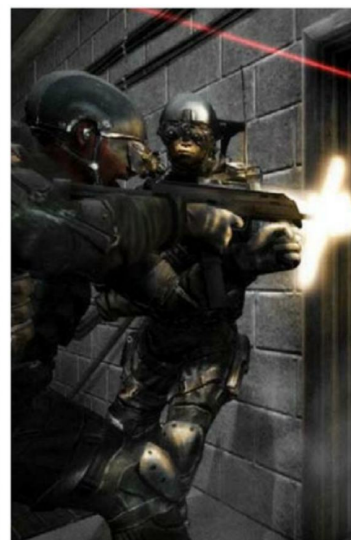
RetroAEROSMITH hasn't seen a single *Iron Man* film, so we were informed. Apparently Robert Downey Junior has been disliked ever since he appeared in *Weird Science*. Seems a bit harsh. We heartily recommend *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* and, well, the *Iron Man* movies. See, it's really not all about games and on occasion you might even get a reference to a John Hughes flick.

So do yourself a favour and join up – without feeling that we're being over the top, the **360 Gamer** forum is pretty much the greatest corner of the internet you will ever find. And if we had to rely on any group of people in a crisis it would be its members. Games, movies, randomness, basic human decency and a wide variety of viewpoints – you'll even find people who want to play *The Simpsons: Tapped Out* with you on your mobile phone or iPad. ■



TOP: *Call of Juarez Gunslinger* – probably not going to be as deep and rewarding as *Red Dead Redemption*, but it's still got people interested on both on the forum and our Facebook page.

ABOVE: This one goes out to **RetroAEROSMITH**. We know what you mean – but wasn't he *meant* to be annoying?



RIGHT: *Rainbow Six Vegas 2* came out positively yonks ago and it managed to let ladies go first – so why do so few modern shooters allow female characters?

COMMUNITY SHOUT

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

And here's where we ask those of you with Facebook accounts to find our **360 Gamer** page and 'Like' it. It's easy, you just go to www.facebook.com/360gamer then click 'Like'. Which you'd have assumed to be the case.

So what happens when you press that thumbs-up button? A world of specially crafted Xbox things will head your way, delivered in a variety of manners that we guarantee won't ultimately choke your usual FB pleasure. We rarely post images of kittens, also. Unless they're kicking ass on Call of Duty or something – then such things become mightily important. We post polls, we answer questions and our 'Friends' even use the page to put out their own thoughts or point to other areas of gaming-related interest.

When a news story is put on our site, www.360-Gamer.com, we highlight it in a Facebook link so you can keep yourself informed about all things Xbox while spooling through your usual picture deluge of what your friends have had for dinner. We'll give you a nice heads-up; you'll get the gist of something newsworthy and be able to click straight to it for further details with no fuss and hopefully no tears. We also add all the latest game trailers that are worthy of your attention, too – modern technology is pretty darned swish like that.

So come along and get yourself involved, since if you really must waste time at work pissing about on the internet then it makes sense to do it properly. We should know.

CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS

TWEET TREATS

So you can't stand how Facebook makes everyone you know come across as being irredeemably self-obsessed and overly satisfied, but still want more of us in your life? Then you want to sign up to Twitter. Forget Stephen Fry and all those other tweeters of lesser note, just hook up to our daily blasts of news, gossip, and reasons you should check out www.360-Gamer.com. We keep it short! We keep it succinct! We rarely use our full allocation of characters!

Twitter is also a pretty nifty way of getting in touch with the magazine when you only have one hand free. Perhaps you're playing *Peggle* and want to share a score. Maybe you've just got a few seconds before your other wrist is placed in handcuffs. It's dashed convenient is what it is.



HAVE IT YOUR WAY

If you thought the only way to get hold of **360 Gamer** was to venture to your local stockist of paper magazines then we're sorry, but you've just chewed off a big fat slice of wrong. Not only can you visit www.360-Gamer.com, check out the website and its archive of reviews and start sorting out the subscription that you've always promised yourself, it's also an excellent portal for the downloading of the magazine's feature-packed and totally whizz-bang digital incarnation.

Figured that still images were pretty nifty? Then wait until you see us what happens to the shape of your face when we can actually provide you with moving pictures and all sorts – it's pretty special. And it gets even more cunning; got an Android, iPhone or iPad device? Then by downloading such apps as PocketMags or Newsstand you can sort yourself out with one-off issues of **360 Gamer** at bargain prices – issues that you can easily conceal about your person and dig out when you're on the train, riding pillion on a bike or being pushed about in a wheelbarrow.

And it's going to get even more cunning-er. We've got some bold plans for our digital version of the mag – plans that one day you will probably tell your grandchildren about. No exaggeration at all.



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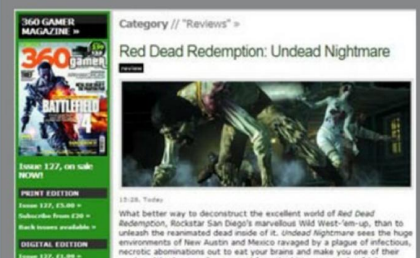
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And of course, there's an awful lot more on the site besides this, so put your feet up and have a good old gander around the whole of www.360-gamer.com to find the hottest daily news updates, plus reviews, screenshot galleries and a feast of 360 gaming.



360 GAMER ON YOUTUBE

Don't forget, **360 Gamer** has its very own YouTube channel featuring all the hottest videos of the games you can't wait to play! While the website only posts the stories, reviews and previews that we think you need to read, our YouTube channel updates with pretty much every trailer we can lay our hands on. Whether it's a totally new game or just an update to something you've already heard about, we'll have it. All you need to do is search for **360GamerDotCom** on YouTube, either via your computer or through the YouTube app on your 360!



CLASSIC REVIEWS

You may or may not have noticed that in recent weeks we've been posting more and more reviews and previews from the **360 Gamer** magazine to www.360-gamer.com, along with multiple daily news updates on breaking stories. If you didn't notice, shame on you! But if you've been eyeing up an old release on those pre-owned shelves but don't want to hand over your hard-earned cash before reading our official verdict, drop us a message on Facebook or Twitter and we'll do our best to upload the review as quick as a flash.

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iPhone 5

Your essential guide to iPhone 5 and iOS 6

If you want to get the most out of the world's favourite smartphone, we've got all the detailed advice, tips and tricks you need in jargon-free form. Plus, the very best apps for iPhone revealed!



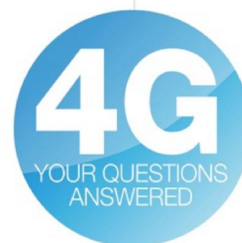
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WALK WITH THE DEAD IN 2012'S GAME OF THE YEAR!

There's no doubt that 2012 was one of the best years for gaming. But even with big hitters like *Mass Effect 3*, *Dishonored*, *Borderlands 2*, *Far Cry 3* and *XCOM*, for many gamers one title stood head and shoulders above the rest: Telltale Games' *The Walking Dead*.

The epic episodic series took the world by storm one chapter at a time on Xbox Live. But whether it was a lack of an internet connection, an unwillingness to wait months between instalments or even just the fact that the title didn't come on a disc or inside a box, a lot of players haven't taken the plunge and checked out the awesome adventure game.

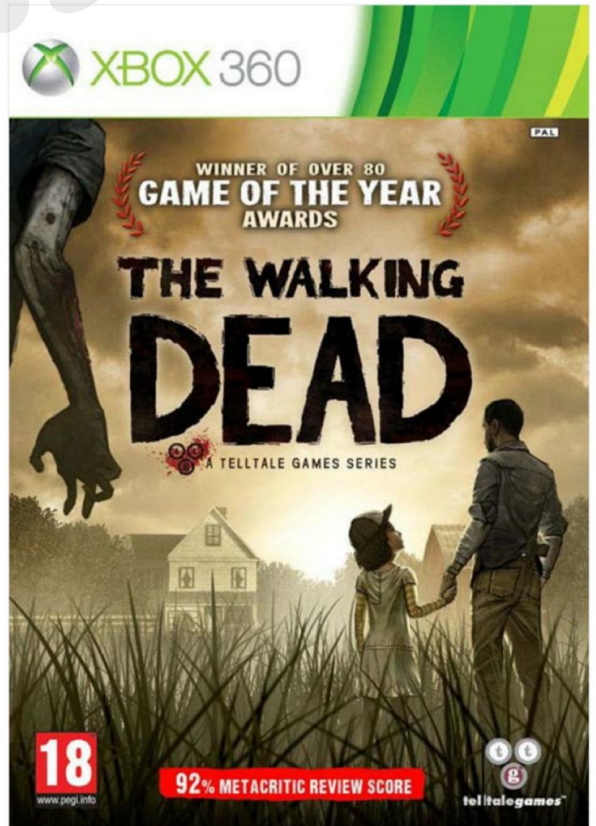
Great news, then, that *The Walking Dead* is now available as a retail release, with a glistening green case and a shiny silver disc to pop in your 360. So if you still haven't sampled one of the best pieces of storytelling in the medium of games, there's no better time to see what all the fuss is about.

And here's some even better news: we've got five copies to give away to you lucky punters! Thanks to the good folks at Avanquest (who get a virtual fistbump for distributing the game here in the UK), you can win yourself one of the best games ever by answering this simple question:

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE LITTLE GIRL WHO STARS IN TELLTALE'S WALKING DEAD GAME?

A) Caramel B) Clementine C) Carmen Electra

Send your answer with your name, address and email to mail@360-gamer.com with the subject "Dead Man Walking" or write it down on a postcard and send to: Walking Dead Competition, 360 Gamer, 3 East Avenue, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH3 7BW. The closing date is 18 June 2013, so get your answers in pronto!



TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This competition is open to residents of the UK and Ireland except those employed by or associated with Uncooked Media and Avanquest. By entering this contest you declare that you are at least 18 years of age. The closing date is midnight on 18 June 2013. Winners will be notified by email within seven days. No cash alternative is offered and prizes may be changed or withdrawn without notice. No correspondence will be entered into and the editors' decision is final.

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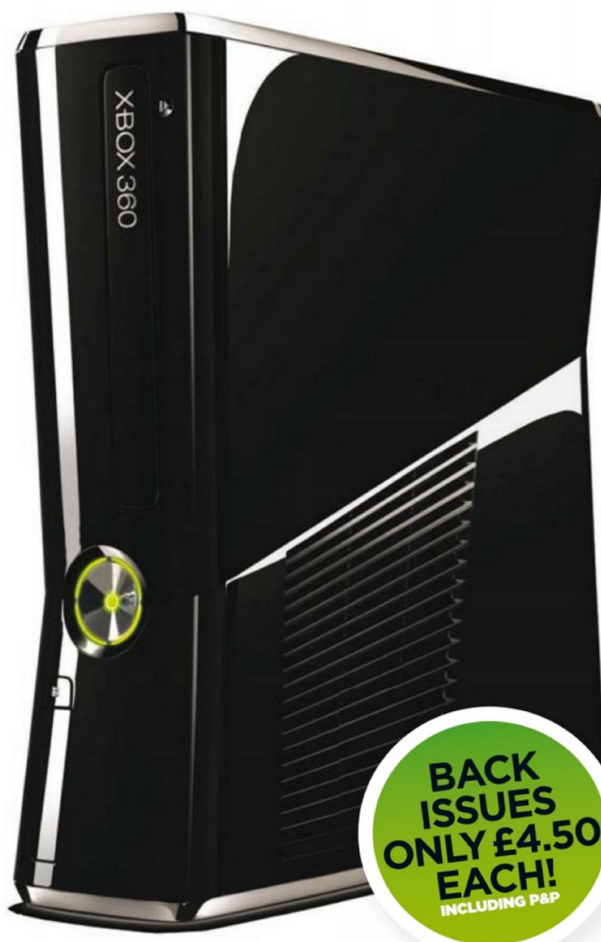
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NEXT ISSUE

BELIEVE IN GHOSTS

So long, Modern Warfare
- COD takes a new direction...

Issue 129

is on sale

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turn to **page 124**

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CELEBRATING THE BEST MOMENTS OF XBOX 360 GAMING

SKULLS OF THE SHOGUN



PUBLISHER:
Microsoft Studios
DEVELOPER:
17-Bit
RELEASED:
30 January 2013

DORM OF THE DEAD

The Japanese land of the dead really isn't the sort of place that even heavy metallers would choose as an ideal final destination. More comparable to Hades than Hell, it's not even somewhere that naughty people are punished at the hands of an unending army of vicious imps or where demons play tasty riffs – that would be far too exciting and fair.

No, this world of darkness known as Yomi is where every living person must go when they die. And when they arrive they get to mill around in swamping gloom as they rot, indefinitely, scuffing their feet on the ground until their toes crumble, forever. Still, it does make for a magnificently hewn and smartly drawn battleground if you're into expertly forged turn-based tactical games. We like it.

So *Skulls of the Shogun* is about taking turns to wipe out undead enemy units, as you guide General Akamoto and his skeletal army of darkness through Japanese deadsville to final victory, gaining powerful abilities by consuming the bony heads of the fallen. With five moves (and a finite amount of rice to, er, haunt) that you can perform each turn no matter how many troops you've summoned, it also features tight

mechanics that promote focused thought while also providing a gamut of possibilities.

From simplicity comes complexity and, with some snappy comedy based on nonsensical but definitely vaguely Japanese mutterings (which wouldn't mean anything to anyone if it weren't for the subtitles), you've got a tightly woven and deeply charming offering that you really should not have missed out on when it was half price last month.

It's just £6.85 for a Live game that, should it actually have been made during the era of 16-bit games that it harks back to, would still be selling for way more than quadruple that price on eBay today. That's not just value; it's a few steps from downright theft.

Its creator, Jake Kazdal, once worked as a Nintendo counsellor, you know. He had to be an expert in every game and offer advice over the phone, and then he helped other companies decide what games they should translate from the Eastern to the Western markets. Oh, and he helped make *Space Channel 5* for Sega. The man has history, and *Skulls of the Shogun* illustrates this fact beautifully. And 800 Microsoft Points? You won't regret splashing 1,200 – well, unless you lack taste.

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